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Nurses on Horseback

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NURSES ON HORSEBACK

NURSES ON HORSEBACK

By ERNEST POOLE

THE AVALANCHE
BEGGAR'S GOLD
BLIND
DANGER
THE HARBOR
HIS FAMILY
HIS SECOND WIFE
THE DARK PEOPLE
THE VILLAGE
THE HUNTER'S MOON
LITTLE DARK MAN AND
 OTHER RUSSIAN SKETCHES
MILLIONS
WITH EASTERN EYES
SILENT STORMS
THE CAR OF CROESUS
THE DESTROYER
NURSES ON HORSEBACK



Nurses on Horseback. *Inset:* Mary Breckinridge

Nurses
On Horseback

By Ernest Poole

New York
The Macmillan Company
1932

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To M. A.

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NURSES ON HORSEBACK

Nurses on Horseback

CHAPTER I

DOWN in the Kentucky mountains snow was falling, late at night, in a lonely region cold and still, the giant beech trees white like ghosts and the small cottage on the hillside dark, its occupants asleep. But a dog began to bark inside, as a voice called up from the trail below:

"Hello, nurses! Hello, hello!"

A window was opened, a nurse looked out and saw a man in an overcoat with a lantern on a shaggy mule.

"That you, Mr. Rainey?"

"Yes. My woman's punishin' mighty bad. We didn't aim to ask you to ride out on such a turrible night, but——"

"That's all right. I'm used to it. I'll be right

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down," the nurse replied. And a few minutes later out she came, dressed in a heavy sheep-skin coat and boots and breeches, forty pound saddle bags over her shoulder and a layette under one arm. She quickly saddled her horse in the barn, threw her flashlight on the leather gear to make sure of girths and straps, then mounted; and following the man down a steep path to the snow covered trail, she was off on a three hour ride to the log cabin in the hills, where a child would soon be born. And she took it all as a matter of course. She was used to it. It was part of her job. She'd been out on scores of nights like that. For hers was one of the nine stations of the Frontier Nursing Service, and that is the kind of service they aim to give to the mountaineers.

"If the father can come for the nurse, the nurse will get to the mother," they say. And so they have done for seven years, no matter what the weather. Trained nurse-midwives in the hills, on call at all hours day and night, they ride to lonely cabins to bring new life into the world and save the life already there. It means hard riding on rocky trails, up icy slopes where the mountaineer may have to get off his mule with an axe and chop out the ice ahead; and in the floods of early spring the nurse may have

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to swim her horse over swollen rivers and creeks. She rides with heavy saddle bags packed for all emergencies and with a "hurricane lantern" or torch. For in the cabin there may be no light but that of the open fire; and no doctor will be there. Two lives will be dependent on the nurse and her alone.

It's a work of such dramatic interest and significance, not only for Kentucky but for other old frontiers, lonely and neglected, all over the United States, that already hundreds of visitors from this country and abroad have come to watch and question and talk with Mary Breckinridge, the woman responsible for it all.

She had been away on a speaking trip, at the time when I went down; but from Lexington that night she came up with me by train; and getting off at daybreak at Hazard, a big mining town hung with smoke in sluggish columns, through which I caught glimpses, on steep hillsides close about, of coal mines, breakers, miners' cabins, we breakfasted in a lunch room and then set out by automobile for her home, some twenty-five miles away.

Our road wound in and out through wooded hills of slate and sandstone, with almost perpendicular little fields of corn and rye. The sun rose and cleared the mists and clothed the hills

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in rich warm russets, leaving blue and purple shadows in the deep-cut creeks below. And all the mines were left behind and we passed rough log cabins now, with stout sandstone chimneys and split oak shingles on their roofs, with tiny barns and corn cribs, white geese and chickens, pigs and mules. We met a boy in a dismal old car, which had apparently broken down. He had bought it, he informed us, for five dollars and a pistol and half a dozen bushels of corn. We passed others on the road, men with miners' lamps in their caps, others with rifles, hunting squirrels. Quiet people, tragic people. Our young driver was the last of a family long engaged in one of the bloody mountain feuds. I thought of feuds and moonshiners and the stories of John Fox. But my attention soon returned to the gracious woman at my side.

A fine looking woman of middle age, rather short of stature, her strong appealing sensitive face lights up in a quick wonderful smile, and her voice, so low at other times, becomes dynamic, when she speaks of "seeing through" the present to the future of this work for frontier mothers and babies and children all over the land. For the work in Kentucky is only a start, a pioneer experiment. I found her reluctant to speak of herself; but on our ride and later

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at Wendover, her log cabin home, I learned the main facts about her life.

She comes of one of the oldest and most noted families in the South. Living at first in Virginia, in 1790 they moved to Kentucky. Most of them have lived there ever since, upon the soil, but with such living has gone a record of public service nearly as long as our national life. Her great-great-grandfather was attorney-general for Jefferson. Her grandfather was vice-president just before the Civil War, and in that war her family was torn apart, with officers in the armies both of the North and of the South. Her father enlisted at fifteen in the Confederate Army, and later in the Navy, and he was stationed on the coast. His father in the meantime had served as a major general and then became Secretary of War for the Confederacy. As such, when the long struggle came to an end, he had to leave the country; he lived in England for a time. Before he left, there was a last meeting of the Confederate Cabinet down somewhere in the far South. Father and son were together there. Worn by privations, the son had become a mere skeleton of a boy. Sent off on an errand, that last day, as he rode away on a big white horse as gaunt as himself, one of the Cabinet members said with a whimsical poignant smile:

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"Gentlemen, there goes the last of the Confederate Navy."

Later the boy went out to Arkansas and there through many hard lean years built a new fortune and career. He went to Congress and became our Minister to Russia in Grover Cleveland's time. But in his old age he came back to Kentucky, his native state.

When she was a little girl, Mary Breckinridge lived for twelve winters in Washington and later for about two years over in St. Petersburg, with French and German governesses. Later she went to a Swiss school and then to one in Connecticut; and nearly every summer she spent with a great-aunt, a Kentuckian, who lived on a country place near New York and who, since the Civil War, had been spending the larger part of her income establishing schools in the South, where thousands of mountain children were given a good start in life. Through her and other relatives, and the public men who came to her father's house in Washington, the growing girl heard many discussions of big national questions that affected rural life, and she came to feel that the health and welfare of the people on the soil were vital to the progress of our whole American civilization. To prepare herself for service, she took the stiff training as a

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nurse at St. Luke's Hospital in New York. Then her mother fell ill and she went home and stayed there for some years. She was always glad to be at home.

"What I really wanted most for myself was to marry and have eight children," she said.

She had married early in life but her husband had soon died. Later on, she married again but the marriage proved to be unhappy, so she took back her family name. Meanwhile a baby daughter had died; and a small son, whom she adored, died when he was four years old. His going knocked a great hole in her life. The war had begun. She went to France with Anne Morgan and worked hard for several years taking care of small French children. But her thoughts kept coming back to Kentucky and to the mothers and children among the Kentucky mountaineers. For she had long known of the urgent need for doctors and for nurses there.

"In America," she said, "the death rate for women in childbirth is the highest in the civilized world. Every year we lose nearly 200,000 babies at birth or in the first month of life and nearly 20,000 mothers. We have lost more mothers in childbirth than men in all the wars we've had."

In the mountains of eastern Kentucky, num-

Nurses on Horseback

berless lives had been lost in that way. The people felt the ravages, too, of such plagues and epidemics as hookworm and diphtheria, smallpox, typhoid and T. B.

So there, when she had come back home, she proposed to make a demonstration of what intelligent nursing could do to safeguard the lives of mothers and children on our many forgotten frontiers, to point the way to other such regions all over the United States.

In the summer of 1923, in the counties of Leslie, Knott and Owsley, covering a mountain region of about a thousand square miles, she made a survey of conditions affecting the plan she had in mind. With a population of twenty-nine thousand, there were only three little towns of from two to three hundred inhabitants each. All the rest of the mountaineers lived in lonely cabins and shacks scattered along the rivers and up the creeks and branches that made deep cuts into the hills. Those narrow canyons were their homes. The steep slopes and ridges above them, covered with fine forests of poplar, black walnut, oak and beech, made free feeding grounds for their hogs. And enormous resources of soft coal lay still undeveloped there. A few of the men went away to work in the coal mines and on the railroads outside, but the greater part

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stayed in the hills. In winter they cut timber, in ways that were fast depleting the forests, and in the floods of early spring they rafted it down on the swollen "tides" of water in the rivers and creeks. Then, on small strips of rocky soil on the slopes and down in the creek bottoms, they raised corn for their huge families and for the winter feeding of their cows and sheep, if they had them, ducks, geese and chickens, mules and hogs. And in autumn came the "foddering"—whole families working early and late to get in the corn before the rains.

The women and children helped in the fields, looked after the cabins and the live stock, raised a little garden truck and drew the water and cut the wood. The women made wonderful "crazy quilts" and some of the men made splint bottom chairs, and a few old crones still carded and spun and dyed the wool for homemade clothing. In the hills the game, so plentiful in the days of Daniel Boone, had long ago been shot away. In the streams the fish had been dynamited by men who came in from the mining towns and made their river hauls at night. For most of the people in the hills, corn pone and potatoes and pork was their food, three times a day, year in and year out.

Poor people, desperately poor. Over ninety-

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nine percent were white, Americans of the old stock, come once from England, Scotland and Wales. Some of them were Presbyterians. More were Baptists. "Holy Rollers," some were called. Many had no religion at all. An old people on an old frontier. Gone was most of the vigor and hope of their forefathers, the pioneers, but not their pride. Slow moving, quiet, low voiced men, they were quick to shoot, when they felt that their rights or their honor were concerned. Moonshiners fought sheriffs and families fought families, sometimes until all the men in each family were dead. And men and boys had volunteered for every war, including the last. In the Civil War most of them fought for the North. In the World War thousands volunteered and many came back with medals from France. Sergeant Sandlin was one of them. A people very slow to change. They danced old dances, sang old songs, brought long ago from over seas. And girls still married at fourteen and were "old mothers" at twenty-five, with few teeth and many children. There were some good mission and settlement schools, but the little public schools were very few and far between and most of them were poor indeed. Very few good physicians in the hills. Ignorant quack doctors and "granny women" nursed the sick



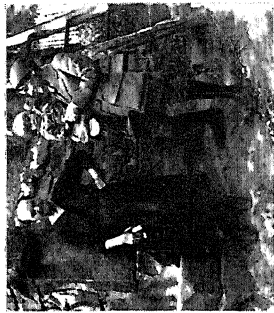
An Old Midwife

Father and Son



A Great-Grandmother

Father and Daughter



Nurse Visiting a Cabin

Hunting Squirrels



A Mountain Mother
A Kentucky Mountaineer

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and said: "Hit was God's Will"—when they died. Many dark superstitions were there and primitive old customs like weeds deep-rooted in the soil. A slow moving silent people, people who liked to live alone.

But they could be hospitable to a stranger at the gate; and though some were suspicious at first, the rest liked Mary Breckinridge. They knew her name. She was of their kin. So they took her in. Scores of nights, in that summer nine years ago, she slept in crowded cabins, sometimes having to share a bed. And rising with the family long before the daylight, often as early as two o'clock, she breakfasted on pork and corn bread and saddled her horse and rode away. Using on her many rides thirteen horses and three mules, she rode nearly seven hundred miles, watching, questioning, listening, giving help and advice to sick mothers and children, learning where the midwives lived and making long trips to their cabins and shacks far up the rougher creeks and branches. She found fifty-three of them in all, and talked with young mothers they had served and with old quack doctors of the hills. And she learned more about them from school teachers and those in charge of the local church missions and settlement schools.

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"Granny women" the midwives were called, because nearly all of them were rugged, gnarled old mountaineers. One of them was the county jailer. Practically all the rest worked with their men upon the soil, looked after the mules and chickens and hogs, and cooked and washed and spun and wove. Most had raised big families. One old woman had "raised eight and lost about as many more." Between them were wide variations both in cleanliness and intelligence. Only four of the fifty-three had information out of books. One had been "a pure scholar" in her day and "knew all the words in the blue-backed speller." Most could neither read nor write, and what midwifery they knew had been learned by watching other old crones.

Though some were silent at the start, the rest of them soon opened up and told Mary Breckinridge what they had learned. They had not begun their practice, it had been thrust upon them. As neighbors they had been called in.

"Somebody had to be around to catch the babies," one of them said.

Two had "cotched" their last babies at ninety. One said she had delivered about seven hundred and sixty in all, and another over a thousand. She could tell by marks she had made in a book. They had begun on cows and sows. Most of

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them had no equipment. When called to a delivery, they knew they would find in the cabin hog's grease to use on their unwashed hands; and that, they told her, was enough. They rarely had a doctor's aid, for it took physicians in towns outside from six to twenty hours on horseback to reach such patients in the hills. For her services, the "granny" charged only from two dollars to five.

Into a crowded cabin she came; and there, whenever possible, she kept her patient out of bed. In most cases the crisis took place on the knees of the father of the child or with the mother standing up. Most of the mothers worked in the fields right up to the time of confinement and were up again in three or four days, or even a few hours. And this worked fine, the "grannies" said, with young mothers of fourteen; but "old mothers" of twenty-two, who had borne half a dozen babies like that, began to show the effects of it all. So things went wrong, lives hung in the balance. And the midwives then recited ancient "spells" from the Bible or laid beneath the bed an axe, edge up, to stop a hemorrhage, or treated the patients with teas they had brewed from herbs made out of barks and roots, more often with tea made from soot. Or they labored hard with greasy

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hands, called in old quack doctors, who knew no more than they did, and together they would work all day and on all through the tragic night.

And though the average midwife claimed that, in most of her hundreds of cases, she had saved both mother and child, she remembered those cases that had gone wrong, for they were haunting memories. And she had grisly tales to tell of long crucifixions ending in death.

CHAPTER II

So Mary Breckinridge learned about the conditions she would have to meet. In order to prepare herself, since there were no midwifery training schools for nurses here, she went to London and took the training at the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies; and she supplemented that by a first hand study of the work of the famous Queen's Nurses, in England and the Scottish Highlands, trained nurse-midwives, in service both in the large centers and the lonely outposts, who in that year, in England alone, delivered 54,544 mothers, with a death rate of but one and four-tenths for every thousand. After some months spent with them, she took the English Central Midwives Board examination and received her license as midwife.

Then she came back home again; and mustering her own resources and those of her relatives and friends, and taking counsel from physicians and experts in public health, and with the backing of the Kentucky State Board of Health, she carefully made her plan of attack. And in May

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of 1925, she formed her organization, to provide trained nurse-midwives for neglected regions, to work in coöperation with the nearest medical service and public health authorities, to deliver women in childbirth and safeguard the lives of little children, to care for the sick of all ages and take measures to prevent disease, and to work for economic conditions less inimical to health.

She began in Leslie County, in the very heart of the mountains; and since her purpose was to work through the people and not for them, she began by organizing a strong local committee of the leading mountaineers. With their coöperation, in the little village of Hyden, which was the county seat, she opened the first nursing center, herself and two trained nurse-midwives in charge.

They had no easy quick success, for some of the mountaineers at the start were suspicious of such "brought on women"—which means women from outside. But in saddle in all weathers, the three workers found their way to hundreds of rough cabins, made friends with the children, cared for the sick, gave help and advice to weary mothers and to others big with child, and when the time of crisis came, brought their babies into the world in ways unknown up there before.

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Small comforts, rest and cleanliness. Exhausted mothers from their beds saw women cleaning, washing, scrubbing, doing things for babies and children. The news of it began to spread by word of mouth all through the hills. And the response of the county, from Hell-fer-Sartin to Hurricane creeks, over Thousand Sticks Mountain and Owl's Nest, was such that in the first four months over five hundred mountaineers, nearly all of them women and children, had registered as patients.

Another center was soon built, on the Middle-Fork River, five miles away. It was built by Mrs. Breckinridge in memory of her two children. Wendover, she called it. She has lived there ever since. And one evening during my stay, she told me this story, which illustrates how she established relations with her mountain neighbors there:

"A twelve year old boy, with heart disease, came to our clinic one winter's day. He belonged to an impoverished branch of the old Morgan family, proud of the men who gave their names to Morgan's Riflemen in Virginia in the Revolution, and to Morgan's Raiders later in the Civil War. Both his parents were long since dead and he had been taken in by a neighbor; and though he did not complain, the little chap was

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thin and pale, and his hands and feet were always cold. In the two room cabin where he lived, he could never get near the fire, he said, because there were so many 'least ones' there. So I asked him to stay with us for a while. Then he showed he was of Morgan stock by asking us if we would 'back a letter'—which means write—to the man who had given him a home. 'He was good to me,' he said. Then he pulled a nickel out of his pocket—all the money he had in the world—and gave it to me, saying: 'If you bust this nickel, you can git a stamp for that thar letter.'

"I meant to keep him here until I could take him down to Lexington for the hospital treatment he required. Later, among our patients, I found others who needed such care, an expectant mother and three small children. But just at that time the ice broke up and the Middle Fork River rose in a surging muddy tide, roaring down the narrow valley, burying the wagon road. It might be a fortnight till I could take my patients out by wagon, I learned; and the woman's case was too urgent for that. So, with the small Morgan boy, the woman and three little children, I crowded into a small flatboat, piloted by a tall mountaineer. Standing with long pole in hand, he steered the whirling little craft

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for ten hours down that angry tide, avoiding ugly rocks and logs and shooting rapids by the score. Early that evening we came to a point where we could land and make the rest of our journey by wagon with a team of mules, up over a steep mountain trail and down to the railroad, in time to catch the late night train. The Morgan boy had been quite unperturbed by the dangerous river ride; but he'd never seen a train before; and when the locomotive headlight came flashing around the bend, suddenly he clutched my arm and whispered:

“ ‘Won’t it git us, ma’am?’ ”

Such service to the mountaineers soon led on to larger things. Grateful young mothers told their friends of how the “brought on women” had helped them, and from all over the county more and more people came to see—curious, often silent, but watching, listening, learning, feeling the value of this work. Wanting it for their neighborhoods, local groups began to form and requests for more nursing centers were made.

“You raise five hundred dollars,” Mary Breckinridge replied, “and we’ll try to do the rest. We want to work together on this.”

Promptly they responded.

“They’re not the kind to beg,” she told me.

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"They're poor but far too proud for that. They're the kind who suffer in silence and won't appeal for charity. And though most of the money for each center has been given by people outside, the mountaineers have done all they could. There's a quality of intelligence and capacity for leadership among their better citizens, and we soon enlisted their aid."

So meetings were held and speeches made. At a rally of five hundred, one leading citizen rose and said:

"I know this woman. She comes of a family long in public service and that has never betrayed a trust. I vote that we help her all we can."

The help was not given in money, for little of that is seen in the hills. But land was donated, and lumber and labor. A widow sent her oldest son to help haul logs with a team of mules. For one center, volunteers gave twenty-seven hundred feet of timber "on the hoof," and others offered to cut it and haul it to the sawmill, where the sawing was done free by various other volunteers. During the sawing, the mill blew up and one of the men was badly burnt. Twenty-four men in relays carried him on a stretcher over a long mountain trail to the nearest nursing center, where nurses dressed the ghastly burns that covered half his body.

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"You women are mighty good," he said, "and if I get out of this, I'll help put up your house for you."

He died of his burns soon after that, but the other volunteer helpers kept on; and, with their aid and generous contributions from people outside, the new center was soon built. Others have been added since. So rapid has been their success and so terribly real and hungry the need and response of the mountaineers, that the work has grown in seven years until, in a small central hospital and eight outlying stations in lonely regions of the hills unreached except by mountain trails, twenty-eight nurses with three supervisors serve today a region covering nearly eight hundred square miles, in the counties of Leslie, Perry, Clay, Bell, Harlan, Knox and Owsley.

"Nearly eight thousand people, most of them women and children, are in our care," Mrs. Breckinridge said, "and we serve about fifteen thousand in all, in various ways, from time to time."

CHAPTER III

THE directing center is at Wendover, her home, a comfortable two-floor log house set high up on one steep slope of a narrow valley. From a beech forest it looks down on the Middle Fork River beneath. The water was low when I was there, and women were washing clothes in the stream; but in spring it rises into a muddy raging flood; and water, too, comes rushing down the gullies in the hillside, and bulwarks and channels of concrete are needed then to protect her home and the other buildings along the slope—cabins and small cottages, living quarters, offices, dispensary and clinic room, an apple bin and stables and barns. There is also a tiny blacksmith shop, for the horses must be shod. And fuel for the cold weather comes down a long wooden chute from a little coal mine up the hill.

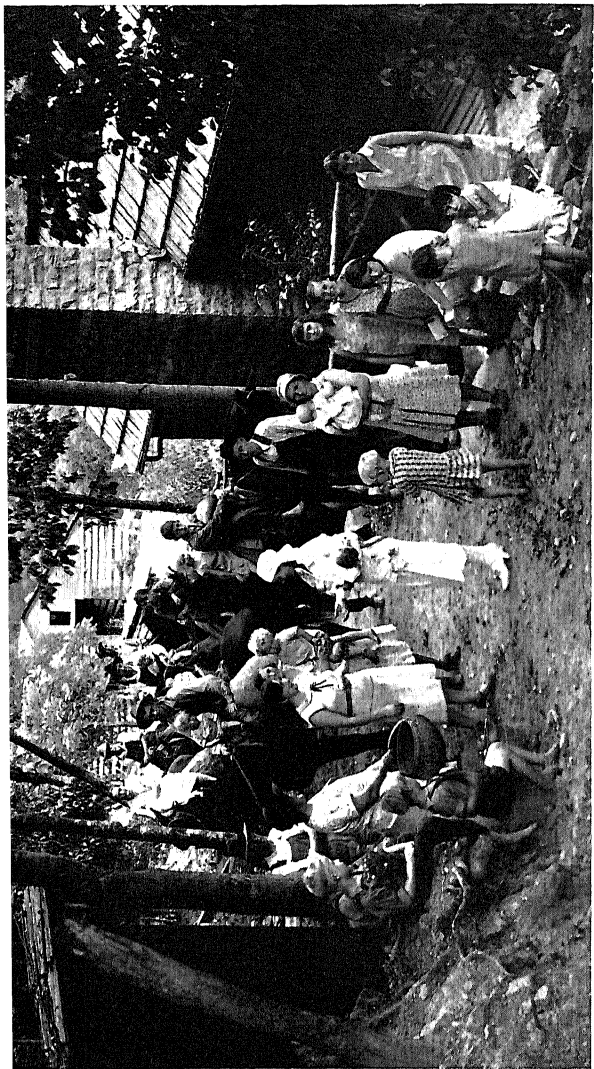
The regular staff of the Service includes two assistant directors, three supervisors, relief nurses, three nurses and a physician in the small



Bringing an Accident Case Across the River

Transporting Injured Mountaineer

Bringing an Accident Case Over a Mountain



Clinic Day at a Center

Nurses on Horseback

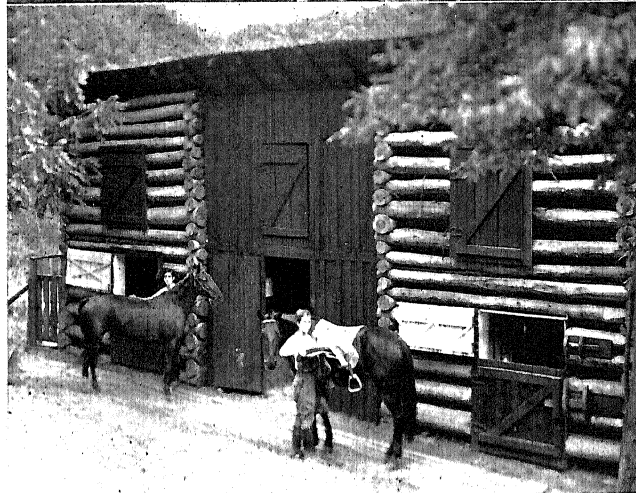
hospital five miles away, and twenty-one nurses in the field. At Wendover there are several secretaries, too, and the couriers, girl volunteers, who from cities north and south come in to help at various times during the spring and summer and fall. Without roads or adequate telephone, and only one slow daily mail, which arrives on the back of a mule, there is need as vital as life and death for quick communication, and the couriers meet it as best they can. Up early to feed and groom their mounts, often they are in the saddle all day and until late at night. Over the winding mountain trails, up rocky creek beds to the gaps and down steep treacherous paths they ride, carrying news and messages, guiding doctors and visitors, and taking out on horse or mule back patients who need hospital care. During my stay at Wendover, a sick horse arrived from one of the centers, "mailed in," slowly led along by the local postman on a mule. And this was a frequent occurrence there. The two girl couriers got to work. One was a Smith College girl. For guidance they had a couple of books on the care of horses. Between them they spent the night in his stall and so managed to pull him through. The nearest graduate "vet" was at Lexington, nearly two hundred miles away.

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A boy of sixteen, from a northern school, came down about three years ago and worked as a courier all one summer. He became an expert in transporting future mothers over mountain trails on mules. As a crowning achievement, toward the end of his service, he brought a woman, who was to have twins, eleven miles on mule back to the hospital for her confinement, for she was to be a difficult case. It took him four hours to make the trip, for the lady had to be handled with care. Because she had several other children, it was hard to persuade her to come; and she agreed only when allowed to bring her "least one" along on the mule. So, as he afterward remarked:

"There were practically four of them. Some job for me and for the mule!"

Finally he got her there. But waiting at the hospital, she worried over the rest of her brood; and slipping out one morning, with her "least one" in her arms, she started to walk back eleven miles over the mountains to her home. Wend-over lay on her way and the young courier was there. Seeking relief from obstetrical cares in a rattling good detective yarn, he happened to glance out of the window and saw the future mother coming stolidly up the trail. In vain he called for female help. The house was empty at



Beech Fork Center
Barn at Wendover and Couriers



Fording Red Bird River

Carrying a Sick Baby to Hospital

A Doctor's Field Clinic

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the time. He dashed into the kitchen and found the cook.

"Here comes that woman with twins!" he cried. "And they haven't got the chance of a snowbird if she does that hike today! We've got to stop her and keep her here! You make some tea and I'll snake her in!"

Hurrying out to meet her, he said, with an ingratiating smile:

"Why, hello, Mrs. D——! Come right on in and have a good hot cup of tea!"

So he "snaked her in" and locked her in, and kept her there till a nurse arrived, and then took her back to the hospital, where the twins were born that week.

The couriers are not the only busy ones at Wendover. The work of the regular nursing staff is divided into three parts—midwifery, general care of families and measures to prevent disease. The supervisor of midwifery practically lives in the saddle, answering the frequent calls from outlying centers for help and advice. The supervisor of general care covers the whole field often, too, and the supervisor of records rides the rounds once a month to check up on the daily, weekly and monthly reports, long accurate detailed affairs, of the nurses at each station. These she keeps constantly up to

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date in a system of files at Wendover, on cards and folders that show in detail the records of the eight thousand patients in the families under their care. About five thousand are children, including two thousand babies and "toddlers."

I glanced over one nurse's report. She had been out making her rounds for eleven hours that day, and during the week she had visited a hundred and forty-three in her care, fourteen expectant mothers and three with babies of less than a month.

Up to May, 1931, the Service had payed 97,-414 such home visits and in addition had received 56,783 visits of patients at the centers. And the cost of all this work—including administration of hospital and centers, salaries, supplies, clinics, social service and doctors' fees, was only \$10.92 a year for each individual served.

"We've cut costs to the very bone," Mrs. Breckinridge told me. "We have to, for it's a struggle to raise outside our growing budget every year."

For this she makes frequent speaking tours and has organized strong committees of friends in many cities, east and west. But times are hard, and meanwhile new demands and emergency needs keep pouring in.

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She told me of the period known as the Great Drought down there, when through famine and disease, the whole region lay under the shadow of death. In the winter and spring of 1930, no rain or snow fell in the hills. The summer came, and still no rain. By August the pastures were parched brown and the corn blackened in the fields. Wells and springs soon dried up, too, the rivers sank to shallow green pools, and by fall the only drinking water for thousands of people was foul with green slime. Dysentery and typhoid spread through the hills, and small-pox and diphtheria, to be followed in the fall by pneumonia and flu. The Frontier Nurses worked day and night, riding far to answer calls in a region of a thousand square miles, tending the sick as best they could, chlorinating infected wells, giving over eleven thousand vaccines and inoculations, and administering relief. They worked against terrific odds. The nearest water safe to use was often over a mile away from a patient desperately ill and in a raging fever.

And famine came. For corn, the great staple food of the hills, was gone, and so was milk for the children. The cows went dry, for fodder was lacking both for them and for the mules. At first the people suffered in silence, for they

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were too proud to beg. A survey of nearly twelve hundred families of mountaineers showed that, though less than eight in every hundred cabins had any surplus whatever of food, the population was carrying without any outside aid the famine relief of fully twenty percent of its members. But they could not keep it up for long. Through the fall and winter, the distress overwhelmingly increased. On account of the depression outside, on railroads and in coal mines, thousands of men lost their jobs and came pouring back to their mountain homes. And in the hills there was no work, for the cutting of timber had been stopped. No streams for floating down the logs, so the only cash crop of the mountains was gone.

Through the efforts of Mary Breckinridge and of mission workers in the hills, the public outside was aroused and the Red Cross came in to aid. Two thirds of the families in the care of the nurses were soon receiving relief; but the Red Cross allowance—of from \$1.50 to \$2.50 for each person for a month—could not cover all essential needs. Mrs. Breckinridge set to work to raise funds. She begged and borrowed to spend on new buildings some thirty-five thousand dollars that year and so gave work at vari-

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ous times to hundreds of needy mountaineers. In addition, the Service supplied canned milk and cod liver oil to over two thousand expectant mothers and young children, and they gave shoes and clothing that winter to several thousand more.

At last, in April, 1931, came the rains for which they had waited so long. The wells and springs were soon renewed, and down the creeks and rivers, on turbulent roaring muddy "tides," came scores of great rafts of the timber, poplar, oak and walnut, which had lain scorching in the hills. The people cheered as they rushed by. Children ran out of cabins to look. Women dropped their hoes in the fields and men at their ploughs stood waving their hats. For the Great Drought had come to an end. Whole families were soon working hard, rebuilding the fences, planting the gardens and clearing their little fields for corn.

But although, with food enough for the winter, a general air of cheerfulness was to be felt all through the hills at the time of my visit there, thousands of cabins had been mortgaged, and there had been an awful increase of mis-carriages and diseases due to that year of semi-starvation—pellagra, pneumonia and T. B.

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"It will take years to overcome the devastating effects of this colossal calamity," Mrs. Breckinridge declared. "And the brunt of it in our district will fall on the Frontier Nursing Service."

CHAPTER IV

THE other nursing centers are scattered over a region about seventy by thirty miles. They are at Hyden (the hospital center), Brutus, Beech Fork, Possum Bend, Red Bird River, Flat Creek, Bowling Town, and also at Beverly, where the nurse works in coöperation with a fine little medical mission. At Hyden and at Beverly are resident doctors to direct; but at the other centers, though aided by directors, supervisors and physicians from time to time, the nurses are so often thrown on their own resources, in matters even of life and death, in the mountain cabins, that none but the ablest women carefully trained are adequate. Many are Scotch or English and took their training over seas. Each American must have first the regular hospital training in this country and so become a graduate nurse. Then for six months she is tried in Kentucky; and if found acceptable, she is sent to England or Scotland, for midwifery training there. After getting her license, she returns for a course of public health work in America, un-

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less she has already had it here. And only after all this is she at last enrolled as a Frontier Nurse.

Though her work is divided into three parts—midwifery, general care of families and the prevention of disease—the Service keeps midwifery first. For an emergency case of childbirth, all other work is put aside. If need be, the whole organization centers quickly on that case. And a wonderful record has been the result. Up to December, 1931, the Service had delivered over a thousand women in the district, with the loss of only one mother at childbirth, and she was a hookworm-cardiac! There was one other, a *mitral stenosis*, who died in the hospital, eighteen days after delivery. Deliveries are still performed by the old native midwives, too, but their activities have waned, while the work of the Service has increased. To show how it is speeding up, nearly four hundred deliveries were performed in the last year. Unfortunately most of them come in the winter months or in early spring, when the trails are almost impassable. Here is what one field nurse wrote in a routine report:

"A big flood Friday and Saturday smashed everything along the river on both sides. At nine o'clock on Friday night, a man came for me from Wolf Creek. He had to swim down the

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road and we couldn't get back the way he came, so we went up Hurricane Creek on the most terrific trail. We had to swim Coon Creek four times and he waded up to his neck nine times. Reached his cabin at midnight, delivered the baby early next morning. Got home in the afternoon and was just dozing off when another call came. Had to take a boat this time. The river was so swift, the boat skimmed past the landing like a piece of driftwood. Landed safely below the ford in the M's bottom field, and reached the cabin that night. At 2 A.M. I caught an eleven-pound boy."

"We have been having a fruitful time," another nurse reported, "Five babies in three days, and one false call, and a sixth baby two days later. In three days I had about four hours sleep. Two fried eggs and a spoonful of rice to keep me going for fifty-two hours. One case lasted thirty-one hours. Slow but steady progress all the time. It was bitterly cold. The wind blew down the chimney and kept filling the cabin with smoke. No windows, so we all sat in darkness around the fire, the smoke making our eyes burn."

They get calls from outside their districts, too.

"Set of twins just arrived at the center," a

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nurse reported not long ago, "their father bringing them on a mule and driving a cow in front for their keep. They are from outside our territory but we could not refuse them. The mother had died in giving them birth. They were five months old and weighed less than seven pounds each. After a hard struggle, they are really beginning to pull up."

But there are other such cases outside that end in cruel tragedies. Not long ago, to one of the centers came an urgent summons from a cabin many miles away. An ignorant old midwife, confronted with something unusual, had worked for several days and nights and tried in vain teas made from herbs and holy sentences from "the Book." But the young mother had grown worse. With a doctor who happened to be at the station, the nurse galloped to the spot. But they found the patient dead, after three days and four nights of agonizing pain.

By contrast, here is one more story, from the center at Possum Bend. On a snowy Christmas Eve, with the anxious man who had come for them, both nurses started out for his home; and though the distance was only six miles, it took three hours to make the trip, because for the greater part of the way they had to wade their horses in darkness up through chilly waters amid

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great boulders and snow and ice, in the gulch called Hell-fer-Sartin Creek. From there by a branch of the creek they came to the steep rocky slope known as Devil's Jump, where they dismounted and led their horses up the slippery trail to the cabin. The man took the horses to the small barn and the nurses carried their saddle bags and the layette into the house. Its single room was lighted by a little coal oil lamp and a log fire in the hearth, and the walls were thickly papered with picture pages from magazines. A couple of neighbor women were there. In the huge iron kettle, water was already boiling; and one of the beds had been made with clean sheets; and there was a large assortment, too, of crazy quilts, both old and new; for since her marriage at sixteen, Sally, the mother, now twenty-six, had been known as "the sewinest an' workinest woman on the creek."

For three long hours, with barely a cry, she went through her agony; and a little after midnight the first Christmas baby on Hell-fer-Sartin Creek was born. When told that she had an eight pound girl, Sally looked at her daughter and said:

"I reckon she's a right pert young 'un."

Meanwhile Sam, the father, had climbed by a ladder into the small loft to tell the news to four

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little boys in the one big bed up there. And one by one their heads peeked down.

"What shall we call her?" Sally asked. A nurse suggested Noel Mary, and Sally seemed greatly pleased with that. Though urged to stay and "take a night," the nurses decided to go home. One of them would return next day and one of the kindly neighbor women offered to stay there all week, to "do for Sally" in the house. So, after Merry Christmases and cups of good hot coffee, the nurses mounted and rode away. The storm had cleared and the moon shone down upon the snowy hillsides. A lovely world for Noel Mary. They reached home before the dawn.

Responding to such treatment, "the little old woman" of the mountaineer has learned to "set a heap of store" by these skilled nurses who come to her aid. With few exceptions, the native girls still marry in their early 'teens; and the quick succession of babies and the hard grinding life they lead turn some into little old women indeed by the time they are twenty-five. Both her love of the children she had borne and her dread of having another were put by one mother into these words:

"I'd ruther have another than lose one!"

For delivery and the care that is given long

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before and after birth, the Service charges only five dollars; and the mountaineers commonly pay not in money but in labor or kind—fodder for horses, skins of “varmint,” chickens, eggs and vegetables, quilted “kivvers” or splint-bottom chairs. A nurse told me of one mother whose fifth baby had been born after the death of her husband, and whose oldest son, aged ten, rode in to the center on a mule, with a splint-bottom chair that he had made.

“I aim to bring you more,” he said, “till the baby is all paid for.”

CHAPTER V

THE care of mothers and babies, though it is still their main concern, almost inevitably leads to the care of the entire family. And this the Service undertakes as best it can, at a nominal fee of a dollar a year per cabin full. In the year ending May, 1931, they looked after 7806 men, women and children in 1675 families. Over two thousand were babies and "toddlers" and over twenty-six hundred were children going to school. They gave bedside nursing to four hundred and fifty-nine cases of serious illness and of these only thirty-four died.

The acute diseases most common are typhoid and diphtheria, dysentery, measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, flu and pneumonia. In winter over half the people suffer from chronic bronchitis, or "brown skeeters," as they call it. Pneumonia often develops from that. The people are riddled with hookworm, too, and there is a terrific amount of T. B.

Many of them still call in the "salve doctors" when they are ill. Illiterate old mountaineers,

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some of them "got a book or two an' tuk up medicine that way"; while others, like Jim Teakettle, who could neither read nor write, delivered "cows an' women" and treated diseases of all kinds, with teas and herbs he had learned about from other old men in the hills. When Kentucky passed a law requiring all physicians to be examined and licensed by the State, to get the law through the legislature, its sponsors had to agree to allow doctors already practicing to continue in their neighborhoods. That was a good many years ago, and only a few "salve doctors" are to be found still in the hills. But though friendly enough to the Frontier Nurse, they often cause a lot of trouble.

"I had a case of pregnancy not long ago," I was told by one nurse. "The woman was feeling poorly and her trouble was quite plain. So I gave her directions and said: 'If you will do this, Mrs. B——, you'll feel much better in a month.' The next week I came back and found old Jim Teakettle in the cabin, spitting tobacco juice on the floor. He had told my patient: 'I'll cure you in two days for a dollar.' So she took his home-brewed medicine. It did no good and she sent for me and after that followed my advice. But it's often hard both for us and the state licensed doctors we bring in; for when

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called to a case like that, we don't know what drugs have already been used; and some of the drugs in these home brews are mighty powerful."

Here is one stark little tragedy that occurred without any medical aid. To the small hospital at Hyden, a young woman barefoot and poorly clad came one cold autumn afternoon, with a baby in her arms and two ragged small children at her side. And she was to have another one soon. Yet she had walked for three long days over rocky trails from her home, outside the region served by the nurses. Her husband, she said, had swelled all up with a "turrible" pain in his side. They were too poor to send for a doctor outside the hills, so she had left him in the cabin and gone out each morning to get in the corn, on which they all depended for food in the winter time. And on the third evening she found him dead. In that lonely cabin, he had been the only one to help her, when her babies were born; and now, with winter coming on, she could not face the prospect of having another baby alone. And she had heard of the Frontier Nurses, so she had come to ask for their aid. They found her a temporary home with a kindly woman who had only one child of her own. And later that winter the baby was born.

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But such demands, growing year by year, keep piling up expenses for social service of this kind, in addition to medical care.

The nurses get accident cases, too. Men and boys, while cutting timber, are struck by big trees crashing down; and others are crushed by falling coal, in the small mines they dig into the hillsides, deep little tunnels with the roofs too often unsupported by beams. Sometimes the head of a family is killed and the Service is called upon for aid. And more often still the nurses are called to look after gunshot wounds. For though feuds are mainly left behind, bad feeling starts, and the mountaineer, a man so quiet as a rule, reaches for the gun at his belt. There are frequent fights as well between the sheriffs and deputies and the moonshiners, who are today more common than ever in the hills. For corn whiskey or "white mule" is still made by large numbers of mountaineers; and that is their own business, they say, and they propose to be let alone. But the stories I heard about them I shall leave for a chapter apart; for, except to take care of the wounded, the Frontier Nurses have kept clear of this little civil war in the hills.

"We keep strictly neutral there," Mrs. Breckinridge told me. "Our business is nursing. When a man is shot in a fight and we are called,

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we do all we can. The fight behind it is not our concern."

But in the meantime they have done considerable shooting of their own. "Nobody ever heard of such shots as ours in the mountains before," said one. For they use needles instead of guns. Up to the time when I was there, they had given in all 43,553 inoculations and vaccines for typhoid, diphtheria, small-pox, influenza, asthma, whooping cough and pellagra, with the coöperation of the Kentucky Board of Health and of other agencies. And suffering as they have so long from the many epidemics, the mountaineers have been quick to respond. Requests for hundreds of inoculations for children in schools will even come from counties outside the region served by the nurses.

"And these requests," Mrs. Breckinridge said, "come often from populations where there has not been one word of propaganda for such work. This would hardly be true of any other population in our land; for, as a rule, an enormous amount of propaganda is necessary in a city to get any kind of an inoculation clinic at all. So far as responsiveness to health education is concerned, I consider ours one of the most progressive in the entire country today."

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And so great has been the success of her organization's health crusade, that already in seven years typhoid and diphtheria have been almost eliminated from their regular territory and good progress has been made in the eradication of hookworm and like intestinal parasites. This last is a long difficult job but a beginning at least has been made, and a full success in this will mean more than any other one thing to the future health of the mountain children.

There, when you see a small boy or girl puny and pale and listless, and ask what the trouble is, the answer you get most often is "Worms." Far more than a third have hookworms and nine out of ten have round worms. About many of the cabins the very earth is alive with such pests, so worms to the average mountaineer are as natural as the world and the weather. But the Frontier Nursing Service has not looked at it that way. And knowing what modern science is doing in other regions to combat this ancient scourge, Mrs. Breckinridge long ago set to work to get help from outside, with the result that in these last years, with the aid of the federal and state health authorities, the Rockefeller Foundation, Johns Hopkins and Vanderbilt Universities and the American Child Health Association, local researches have been made

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and an active campaign was begun at a town not far away, where at a field laboratory eight hundred and twenty worm cases were treated with a new drug, with miraculous results. Here are just two cases, taken from the report:

“Leona S——; six years old, had 250 round worms. After treatment, four eggs only, equaling one feeble worm. Crit B——; sixteen years of age, had 2000 hookworms. After treatment, 100 only, on the egg count.”

When re-examined in the spring, these children were discovered to have about as many worms as before, but the incidence was less virulent. And experiments have proved that by repeating the treatment every three months for a year or so, a lasting cure can be achieved. Moreover, the new drug is infinitely safer than any that have been used before, and mountain mothers can be taught to give it to their children themselves. So there is real hope at last for complete riddance of this pest. For the worm larvae or eggs in the soil will soon die out, unless they can find a human host to hatch in.

The Service, from the beginning, has labored hard to educate the people in other measures for the prevention of diseases. And this has been slow up-hill work; for the mountaineers, although quick to see the value of inoculations, had

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very little use at first for "furrin" sanitation ideas demanding changes in their homes, where many habits and customs inimical to health were ages old and rooted deep. But year by year, by slow degrees, as the nurses prove themselves friends indeed and the people listen to their urging, infected wells are chlorinated and sanitary toilets built; screened cribs are made for babies and in summer doors are screened, and dark cabins have windows cut in the walls to let in sunlight and fresh air.

CHAPTER VI

I CAUGHT some interesting glimpses of the people in the hills, on a ride I took with one of the nurses, on her regular daily round. As we started out that morning, she asked:

"Did the dogs bother you last night?"

"No. I did hear a little barking but went right to sleep again."

"We don't," she answered, with a smile. "Last night the excitement was only a possum—but those barks so often mean that an expectant father is arriving on his mule, to fetch one of us for his wife. Barks mean babies," said the nurse.

For about a mile or so, we rode down the Middle Fork by a winding sandy little road. The steep hillsides on either hand were hazy and soft, that autumn day, with the warm rich gold of the beeches and the white of the sycamores clothing the slopes in lovely hues in the mellow sunshine up above. And there were great soft shadows of blue and purple down below. And

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deep stillness, barely a sound—until a litter of little brown pigs, in terrible excitement, came squealing and scampering over the road. I have never seen such clean little pigs as I saw all through the hills that week. For their sties are the forests and they feed on good clean beech nuts from morning to night. Two big white geese came waddling down a corn field so very steep, they had almost to sit on their tails to keep from coming head over heels. A small bare-foot girl came up the road, riding a shaggy pony, with a baby on a pillow before her. The nurse stopped to speak with her and to have a look at the wee boy, and she told his sister to bring him to the clinic next day. We passed several big log rafts stranded in the river below. There would be little cutting of timber this year, for the “tides” last spring had come too late to float down all the logs, I was told, and cut timber in great quantities still lay waiting in the hills.

We came to a model cabin built by the Service, to show how, at little cost, a mountaineer could build a house with adequate doors and windows screened against the flies and mosquitoes that bring typhoid into homes, and with walls and floors with no gaping cracks to let in the winter weather. I thought of some dirty old cabins I'd

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seen and asked the nurse if in her work she was bothered by vermin in mountain homes. No, she had found few "cooties" there.

"What bothers me is chickens," she said. "I go to a delivery case, sterilize my supplies and lay them out on a table or on a board between two chairs. But right at a critical moment, I'll turn to pick up something and find a couple of chickens parading their dirty feet over the lot—which means of course that I must stop and sterilize them all again. Another trouble is the cold. Many of the cabins have chinks or cracks in floors and walls. On zero nights the wind blows in; and in spite of open fires, some of the cabins get so cold that often I've reached for the baby's cord-tie and found it frozen solid in the sterilizing pan!"

We met a young mountaineer walking up the road with a broad-ax on his shoulder, and we stopped to speak with him. When I made some trite remark about the beauty of the hills, his lean brown face lit up in a smile.

"Yes, it's a nice country," he said. "We're kind of backward up in these hills as to automobiles and roads, but I'd kind of hate to see 'em here. It's good to have some country left as it was when first created. But we like Mrs. Breckinridge and all the work she's doin' here."

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And turning to the nurse, he added: "I sure do have a warm feeling in my heart for you."

As we rode on, she told me how on a cold, still winter's night he had come to fetch her for his wife. She had followed his mule and his lantern three hours up a rocky creek and one of its still rougher branches, and finally he had cut with his ax steps for her horse up an icy slope that led to his home at "the head of the holler."

"He was so quiet about it," she said, "and so apologetic for getting me out on a night like that. And his wife was quiet, too. Although her labor was long and hard—for she had borne already three children and was 'an old mother' at twenty-one—she went through it with teeth set hard, and in silence right to the end—because she didn't want to wake up the three little 'least ones' in the next room. And most of the women are like that. These people in the mountains bear pain as unflinchingly as those I used to care for in the Scottish Highlands. Only last month I got a call to a ten year old boy down the river. He had been out after fish with a spear. It was barbed, and he stumbled on the rocks and ran the spear into his foot, so deep that the barb got caught in the tendons and they couldn't pull it out. I reached him two hours after it happened. He lay on the ground with

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his face white. It took me some time to get it out, for I had to probe deep and even move some of the tendons where it was caught. But though he nearly fainted, the little chap made not a sound."

We let our horses run a bit along a level stretch of road. Mine sharply swerved; and glancing down, I caught a glimpse of a big ugly copperhead coiled in the brown autumn leaves. He struck savagely at my horse's leg, but missed, and we got safely by. I asked her what they did about snakes.

"Every one of us," she replied, "carries in her saddle bag the snake serum to be used for copperhead and rattler bites. It's wonderful what it can do. I was called once to a little girl who had been bitten on the neck. I reached her in an hour's time but her neck was already badly discolored and swollen twice its natural size. In a few hours, she would have died. Yet after that first injection, you could almost see the swelling go down. I gave her another the next day; and by the next, she was wholly cured."

We came to a one room cabin with a still smaller hut close by—in fact, not over ten feet off.

"Why the two cabins?" I asked the nurse. She smiled and answered:

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"They're divorced."

"The cabins?"

"No, the couple inside. I happen to know the story because I delivered a baby there. The man wasn't sure he was its father. In time, he convinced himself that he was not. So he felt something must be done. He couldn't shoot the other man—who had already left the hills—but he made up his mind to divorce his wife. He got a divorce at the county court. But he needed a woman to cook for him and look after the children, so he built for his wife that smaller cabin and there she has lived ever since!"

Fording the shallow river, we took the trail up Muncie's Creek. Out on the narrow porches of the cabins that we passed, mountaineers sat smoking their pipes. For their "foddering" had all been done; and with corn all under shelter and plenty of fruit and vegetables put up for the winter in jars by their wives, they felt they could take life easy now. We met several in their store clothes riding down on their way to court at Hyden, the little county seat. For the circuit judge had just arrived and various "shootin' cases" were on, and a sociable time would be had by all. I decided to go there myself next day. I asked my companion about it and learned that the courthouse windows had been shot out.

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"But that was just in play," she said. "There isn't half as much killing up here as the papers would lead you to believe. If you hear a good many cases at court, remember there are a good many thousand people tucked away in these hills. And they aren't at all afraid of guns. There are millions of people in cities and towns who would shoot if they dared to, when they get angry—but they're afraid to. These men are not. And sometimes they get angry. Then they shoot. But all the rest of the time," she said, "they're quiet people—very quiet. They go to bed about seven o'clock and get up at two or three in the morning. They don't have breakfast until five, but they don't like to hurry about such things—or hurry about anything. When they're alone, they will breakfast on corn-bread and potatoes and pork. Dinner the same and supper the same. The pork just stays in the frying pan. They eat a lot of it—much too much. But if you consent to stay for a meal, they'll cook for you fried chicken instead, and with the corn and potatoes will be turnip and mustard greens and biscuits and stewed fruit and jam. They are the most hospitable people I have ever seen. But the women are shy—terribly shy about being examined. They put all their children out of the room."

CHAPTER VII

FROM the creek we turned up a rocky lane with high stone walls on either hand. Above us upon higher ground, on one side was a big log cabin and on the other a log crib filled with enormous chunks of soft coal, mined from a neighboring hillside. And from the cabin to the crib was a crude little wooden bridge, so high that we could ride beneath it.

"What's this bridge for?" I inquired. "When they want to get some coal, why not just walk across the lane?"

"Because this isn't a lane," said the nurse. "It's a branch of Muncie's Creek. It happens to be dry just now but in March I've seen it filled with a 'tide' of water six feet deep!"

Dismounting, we went up to the cabin. It was a large one, of four dark rooms. Only two windows and open doors. We came into a low square room with heavy timbers overhead and a huge stone fireplace, with a fine old mantel of oak and a soft coal fire smouldering. In corners were two double beds. A large quiet woman

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had come in; and leaving her alone with the nurse, I went into the kitchen. One more bed. Then I glanced through open doors into the bedrooms. Still more beds. And children of all ages, from a girl who looked sixteen down to a baby two years old, stood there and watched me, some of them whispering now and then. I counted eleven of them in all. And the father and two sons were up on the hillside cutting wood. Fifteen in the family. This was a second marriage, I learned, both for the husband and the wife; and the children of all three marriages were gathered here under one roof. There would be another baby soon.

"Why aren't these kids in school?" I asked, as we returned to our horses below.

"Some of them do go now and then," answered my companion. "But the nearest school is three miles off, and it's open only from July to January. After that it shuts down, for the roads in winter and spring are too bad for the children to get there. They don't learn much when they do—for it's one of the poorer schools. I'll show it to you later on. Just now we'll ride up this branch a piece to a mother and baby I want to see. He's a splendid little boy—born about four months ago."

Up that crooked little branch, we rode for

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about a half a mile. Our horses picked their way with care, through boulders and over broken rock.

"I had to come up here pretty fast the night that boy was born," said the nurse.

"Did you have a lantern?"

"Yes. But the dancing lights and shadows it made only frightened my horse, so I put it out and let him go it in the dark. He knows this district mighty well and his feet know everything about rocks. He came up here on the run that night and we didn't have a single fall."

The cabin where the baby lived stood on a slope above the branch. It was in a small dirt yard. I should see it in spring, my companion said, when it was a lovely little place, with flowers and peach blossoms there. But now there were a few chickens instead, and a couple of pigs and two or three geese, kept in by a high picket fence. Most of the cabins have such fences and you generally stop at the fence, and call "Howdy" and wait to be asked in. It's a habit from the old feud times.

"Howdy!" called the little nurse. A very clean young woman, with red hair twisted up at the back and a wide and friendly smile, came out on the porch and invited us in. The nurse took a pair of scales out of one of her saddle bags.

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"I've come to weigh the boy," she said.

The boy lay absolutely nude, wriggling delightedly on a wonderful "crazy quilt," on a big clean double bed. And the whole cabin was like that—clean and crazy. There was not a spot of dirt that I could see on floor or walls, and the walls were absolutely mad with the pages of illustrated magazines and old Sunday supplements, all pasted very neatly there, both to keep out the weather and make life interesting inside. The only trouble came from below. For the cabin stood on corner posts and the wind came underneath and up through cracks in the plank floor. But I liked the cozy little coal grate, high up in the stone fireplace, and the old oak mantel overhead, and the small boy on the bed, who in his four months of life had absorbed such abounding vitality that to weigh him was a hopeless job. He kicked and bounced and wriggled so. And when put back upon the bed, he lay there and laughed at us. He had bright blue dancing eyes.

"You're my prize baby," said the nurse. And as we rode away, she added: "If only all mothers were like that! She does everything I tell her and then wants to know what else she can do!"

We went back to Muncie Creek and on up by

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an easy trail. We passed a couple of peevish pigs—peevish because their huge wooden collars kept them from squeezing through a fence into a garden full of things with which they might have stuffed themselves. As we rode on, it was so still. Hearing a low soft halloo, which seemed to drop out of the hazy sky, I looked up to the steepest corn field I have ever seen in my life; and I saw a woman and two children bringing down a load of corn, on a rude sledge that bumped and lurched and tried to get away from them. They had a dog who was wagging his tail. When he saw us, he started to bark. But he stopped. And after that, it was still again.

"Here's another case," said the nurse. And she reined in her horse at a cabin close by. The case was standing out in front, a girl of sixteen who would soon have a child. She stood there with bare feet and legs, in an old cotton dress that came to her knees. She was shy at sight of me, so I left them together and went up to a little log barn, where her thin leathery young husband and a brother of fifteen were harnessing a small horse to a sledge. We sat down on a log and smoked cigarettes. Ever since he was married two years ago, he had been looking for work, he said, on the nearest railroads or cut-

Nurses on Horseback

ting timber in the hills. But he could get nothing. Then came the Drought and burnt up his three little corn fields. Last winter he had shot or trapped or treed a few coons and possums, and two foxes and some squirrels. Then he got pneumonia and was laid up all through the spring. In the summer he had worked on his fields and his picket fences, but nothing seemed to grow as it ought to. He had only just enough corn and potatoes for the winter, and about a dozen hogs. No cow, no milk for the baby, no chickens, no green vegetables.

The nurse came up from the cabin then, to have a look at the young brother's teeth, which had been bothering him. About half of them seemed to be badly decayed. She told him to go to the hospital at Hyden, some eight miles away, and from there they would send him by motor bus down to Hazard, the mining town, where a dentist would attend to him. He would not have to pay, she said. Later, as we rode away, they started with the horse and sledge for the hillside to bring down some corn. But they stopped by the cabin with the young wife, the girl who had married at fourteen; and, as I looked back from the road, all three stood staring after us. They made a listless little group.

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By contrast, as we rode along, the nurse told me of a widow woman who, about a year ago, had come over on a mule from her distant cabin at Stinking Creek.

"Hit's about my daughter," the woman said. "We've got mighty little up our way but I want for my children the best I can find. I sent my oldest boy last year off to a school outside the hills, to try to make somethin' of his self. And now hit's my daughter. She's fourteen. She got married awhile ago and she's go'n' to have a baby soon. And I've had enough of the 'granny women.' They're no good if things go wrong. And I've heard tell of you women and the way you cotch a baby, and I want you for my girl. So I aim to bring her over long before her baby comes and have it careful from the start. I know a cabin where they'll take us, only a few miles from here. Will you look after her?"

"We will."

A little later, the two arrived. The girl had never left home before. She was primitive, even for the hills. She said little, did as she was told. But she had somewhere deep inside the same force her mother had. The baby came in February. Rain fell that night on top of ice and made the trails so slippery that, when her brother, twelve years old, came on a mule to

CHAPTER VIII

A MILE or two farther along the trail, we reined in to say howdy to an old woman, rugged and wrinkled, who sat on the narrow porch of her cabin, smoking a short corncob pipe. She was a midwife of the old school and her name was Spicy Steep. She had raised and cured the tobacco she used and had smoked it all her life, she told me, even while she was "cotching babies." Most of the mothers had smoked pipes, too, until the pains became too hard.

"When they git punishin' too bad to smoke, I give 'em a twist' of tobacco and tell 'em to chew. It's good for 'em," she said. "Corn liquor is good for 'em too, an' there ain't nothin' like it for a baby that ain't well. I've raised some feisty ones that way. A little liquor now and then helps to make 'em pert an' strong."

She had "cotched" hundreds in her time and was at it still, she said.

"I don't have no trouble at all when it comes natural," she declared. "When it don't, I give

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the mother tea, an' make her drink it good an' hot."

She told us of the teas she brewed from various herbs and roots and barks. She knew where to find them in the hills. She chewed them and knew them by their taste. One was for typhoid, which she called "the killing fever." And another was for hookworm.

"The tea she made for that," said the nurse, "smelled just like the drug sent down by the Rockefeller Institute. How she got hold of it, nobody knows."

Pleased by this small tribute, old Spicy talked on freely now. She told me of the "tansy tea" that she gave to the new born, "to bring out the rash that you must have before you die and when you are born"; and of catnip tea for stomach ache, and of sassafras and pennyroyal and "fever teas" of various kinds. For the treatment of measles, she brewed a tea of ginseng and sassafras. She had cured a whole family that way. The mother and five children, each with measles, lay on the floor, with a can of ginseng and sassafras tea within the reach of every one.

"I went an' saw 'em now an' then and brewed more tea for 'em," she said. "An' in about a week or so, they was all pert as can be agin!"

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Then she talked about "the turn of the moon." That was the time to wean a child—" 'cause babies git so feisty then." Sore eyes, too, got better then, and so did women big with child. For hemorrhage in childbirth, she had no use for "holy spells"; and it did no good to put *any* old ax, with its edge up, under the bed. No, you must get one that had cut down hundreds of trees in its time, she declared.

"An' if that don't do no good, I tell the man to jump on his mule an' git one of you women," she said.

In payment for deliveries, she charged three dollars for a woman and two dollars for a cow. The payment was not often in cash. Instead, the man of the family would come and plough her corn field or do her "foddering" in the fall, or else he would pay in wood or coal or ducks or chickens or a hog. A few did pay in money, though, and that was the main reason why she kept on "cotching babies" at her age of eighty-nine. For old Spicy needed money—eighteen dollars every year. She sent it to the American Convulsion Company, she said, for medicine for her daughter, for fits. And this she had done for about twenty years.

Feeling as though I had dropped back into the Dark Ages, I asked the nurse, as we rode on,

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where was the nearest radio. There were two, in small post office stores, within about twenty miles of us; but they were out of order a good deal and they couldn't reach many big stations, she said.

Soon we came to the school she had promised to show me, a bare frame cabin of one room. A dozen children stood outside and stared at us, while the teacher, a girl of seventeen, sat on a log with a book on her knees. Inside the school, I found only one book and most of its pages were badly torn. There were also two pencils, a few sheets of paper and a couple of old slates. In all three windows the glass had been shattered.

"Shot out in play," explained the nurse, "for many of the older boys carry pistols like the men. Too bad, for it means a cold school house this year, and the children have colds enough as it is.

"I came here last year," she continued, as we rode on up the trail, "to inoculate for typhoid. There were only ten small children then, from six to ten or twelve years old, all pale and puny from the Drought. And there was a still younger girl in charge and not a pencil or a book. She had written on the blackboard:

"Where will you spend eternity?"

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"And all her teaching was centered on that. First, she made them spell the letters, then pick out and read the words, and then she went on to arithmetic. How many children thought they would go to heaven, how many to hell, she asked. And as the puny little things very timidly replied, there were only four who hoped for heaven, the other six feared they were going to hell. That led us to arithmetic.

" 'If four of you children go to heaven and six of you go to hell,' she asked, 'how many children in the school?'

"And another cheerful question, that she put to those poor little tikes, was this: 'If ten children are in a school and only four of them go to heaven, how many are left to go to hell?'

"On and on the lesson went. When I came back next morning, they were working at the same sentence still."

"What do these mountain people think about heaven and hell?" I asked. "Have they any religion here?"

"Many of them have," she said, "and there are some good missions here, backed by the leading citizens. But among my patients, any religion they may have is something they keep to themselves. There are plenty of superstitions about. They've told me of 'hants' and haunted

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houses, one with 'a wailing baby' inside. But they don't like to speak about such things. I think many of them have a feeling of terrible forces in the dark. When darkness comes, they go into their cabins and have their suppers and go to bed and don't come out again until dawn. When they come for me at night, often two will come together. They don't like to ride alone at night; and I don't believe it's from fear of shots, for they're perfectly fearless about fights. I think they're afraid of something else, some evil powers in the dark. I'm not speaking of the well-to-do but of the poorer mountaineers. Many of them are 'Holy Rollers,' who get together now and then in some cabin to preach and sing. But I think many go to such revivals just for the excitement.

"When one of them dies, they dig a grave a little up the hillside, out of reach of the 'tides' in spring. I saw a little girl buried like that. She was six years old, such a dear little thing; and I know how her mother loved that child, for we fought together for her life. Yet now the mother just sat on a log, looking silently at the small pine box, as the father put it in the earth and the other children stood around. Later, when some preacher comes, they'll probably have a service there.

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"When they marry, the wedding is simple, too. I went to one not long ago. I had given a dress to the young bride, for she had been a patient of mine; but she didn't wear it that night. Neither she nor her parents nor the groom, nor the few neighbors who dropped in, had bothered to put on Sunday clothes. The bride and groom had gone to the squire, and he had made them man and wife. Now they just sat silent, while her young brother recited something out of the Bible. Then with their friends they went into the kitchen for pork and potatoes and corn bread; and after that, they went outside and, with a good deal of joking and laughing, the men put the bride and groom on a rail, sitting astride it, the bride in front, and so rode them down the creek. They've done this at every wedding I've seen."

All that morning she kept stopping at cabins to call "howdy." Often a baby or a child was brought out for her to see, and sometimes she went inside. All morning she kept asking patients to come to her clinic the next day. She did this in order to save her time, for it takes all day to make the rounds. They lunch in the saddle, as a rule, or with some hospitable mountaineer. But I had had enough that morning, so we went back to the nursing center. I had

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not ridden for some years, and four hours in an army saddle left me pretty stiff and sore. After dinner I took it easy till dusk. Then I went out for a walk up the river, and there I met the little nurse. Having been out all afternoon, she was trotting quietly home in the dark.

"Tired?" I asked her. She smiled down.

"Oh, no, it's just a day," she said.

CHAPTER IX

WITH Mrs. Breckinridge next day, I started out, with our saddle bags packed, to ride the rounds of the other centers. We visited five in all.

Our first stop was at Hyden, the county seat. A little town of only some three hundred inhabitants, with cottages and cabins extending up the hillside, it centered on one broad short street, which was heavy with dust that afternoon. My companion left me there and rode up to the small hospital of the Service, on the hill, while I stayed down to visit the court house, a square brick building two floors high, with a little jail behind and in front a long line of horses and mules.

I went in and up bare dirty stairs to the courtroom, square and high, with white ceiling and blue plastered walls, two tall coal stoves in corners and four high windows at either side. Those on the street side had been opened, those on the other had been shot out. But on that warm muggy afternoon, the air was heavy with odors of sweat and of stale tobacco smoke.

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Spectators of all ages sat on wooden benches, at the back and along the sides; and at front center, facing the judge, sat the jury. Three were women. One of them was wrinkled and old. She wore a little round black hat with two black plumes; and she sat smoking a short clay pipe, which looked to be nearly as old as herself. Between the jury and the judge were a couple of tables, with several lawyers sitting there. Beside the judge, at his long high desk, was a pail of water with a dipper; and now and then some thirsty smoker would come up and take a drink. The judge was a short stocky man, with a ruddy handsome face and thick grey hair. He wore no gown but a plain grey suit, with a soft shirt and flowing tie. He wore glasses and he was smoking a pipe. Behind him stood the former sheriff, with a black patch over one eye. It had been shot out by moonshiners. A young moonshiner now stood in the dock; and the judge was passing sentence, in an easy conversational tone.

"You not only broke the liquor law but shot a deputy in the arm. So I'm going to give you a year," he said. And the lean young prisoner replied:

"All right, judge, that's far an' squar, an' I ain't got any cause for complaint." He was led away.

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"Next case," said the judge. And there followed a long civil suit, with a tall lawyer orating his way into the intricacies of an old land title dispute. Most of the people soon left the room, for the fun was over for the day. I went with them; and outside, I had a talk with one of the lawyers, who told me quite a lot of things.

In this county circuit court, he said, most of the civil cases were concerned with land title disputes, like the one that had just begun. About half the mountaineers were tenants to coal companies and other large holders, who had bought large tracts of forest land, for future use of the timber and coal. These company titles were clouded, more or less, through squatters' claims. Some of the squatters had been there for many generations, and had titles that held good in court. Others had come more recently and their claims caused frequent disputes. So the companies, to keep them off and strengthen their own titles by possession, were glad to have tenants on the land and charged them either nominal rents or more often nothing at all—the tenants agreeing in return to watch out for forest fires and keep new squatters and timber poachers off the land, even if they had to shoot. And they had to shoot quite frequently.

Considerably more than half the time of this

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county circuit court was spent on criminal cases, he said. Theft and robbery were rare, and met heavy punishment, for the hill people didn't like such crimes. If a man stole a horse, he was likely as not to be shot by the owner; and shootings, not only for such a cause but for other private disputes, got off, as a rule, with acquittals or sentences extremely light. Defendants, while awaiting trial for murder or manslaughter, were generally let out on bail—while for a theft you stayed in jail!

Up till a few years ago, much of the shooting had come from feuds; and in most such cases, the court had been powerless, he said. He told of the White Baker feud, which had run on for generations, in a neighboring county. It had ended fourteen years ago, when three young men on one side met three on the other, in front of the courthouse. All six were killed, and they were the last young men of both families. Another feudist, a wealthy man, was killed; and later it was found he had left ten thousand dollars in his will, "for the prosecution of the man who kills me." So sure was he of being shot!

Most of the criminal cases here were settled without any trial at all—for nearly three-fourths of them in this court, and practically all in the

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federal court, were liquor cases, the lawyer said, and evidence was hard to procure.

"The great majority of these people drink corn liquor," he went on, "just as they did in former days. They call it Moonshine, or sometimes White Mule. The nurses don't see much of it, for the people are apt to stick it away when a Frontier Nurse comes up the trail, because the nurses have said so much against giving it to babies or sick people. And I reckon they're right. But the people still make it, for use or sale; and since the Volstead Act went through, I think its sale is on the increase. For there's such a big demand from outside. They make it either in their homes or more often in a deserted cabin or some cave back in the hills. All they need is a vat for the corn mash and a boiler and a 'worm,' which is a coil of thin copper pipe. With that small equipment, they can make from twenty to fifty gallons a day. They use it themselves and give some to their neighbors, or trade it for pigs or chickens or corn. But most of it goes outside the hills. They sell it for three dollars a gallon to bootleggers, who take it away; or else they take it off themselves, to the nearest mining towns.

"There's a man about fifty miles from here, who has worked out quite a system, I'm told.

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Our people go over the mountains to him and he tells 'em where liquor can safely be sold, in places that change from time to time. And they pay him a percentage for that. He is said to have made quite a fortune and to have bought protection. He has only once been haled to court and even then he got off scot free. It's the little fellows that get caught. The federal authorities have their own men up here in the hills, but they rely more on the local sheriffs and the deputies. A deputy sheriff may be paid fifty dollars for the arrest and conviction of a moonshiner caught at his still. But as I told you, it's mainly boys and the little fellows that get caught, while the regular moonshiners, who make it a business, get off free. They buy off the informers; and witnesses against 'em are almost impossible to procure, although the federal government offers a witness five dollars a day, which means five days' wages here. For witnesses like to stay alive.

"A federal man, some years ago, sneaked up to a little mountain cabin and, when the owner resisted arrest, the agent shot both him and his wife, in front of their two small kids and their baby. That agent, as near as I recall, didn't stay alive much longer. Quite a few informers have also been shot; and I know of one man

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who, when trapped in his home, shot and killed three deputies. That was several years ago and he hasn't been convicted yet. For these people in the hills feel they've a right to do what they've a mind to with their own corn, in their own homes. And they're the kind who will shoot for their rights. There hasn't been so much shooting of late of federal agents up this way. Why shoot a man when you can buy him? If the buying ever stops, then the real shooting may begin.

"The Frontier Nurses have kept out of this little civil war in the hills. But nobody ever sends in vain for a nurse to come to a wounded man, no matter if he's a sheriff, a deputy or a moonshiner.

"I'll give you a story about that. Some miles from here is a deputy known as the deadliest shot in his county. Even so, he has had to change his residence a number of times. Not so very long ago, he went with the sheriff to a cabin where he'd heard there was a still. In that cabin lived three men, an old man of eighty, his son and his grandson. When called upon to surrender, the three came out on their cabin porch with a rifle and two shot guns and shot out the sheriff's eye. But the deputy with his pistol got all three of 'em from his horse. A neighbor galloped up the river on his mule to get a nurse. It was the mid-

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dle of the night. When she heard him holler outside, she got up and dressed and saddled her horse and followed him. The moon came out, she told me, and pretty soon he turned in his saddle and said to her :

“ ‘Don’t ride so close. There’s been four shot already tonight and there may be some more shootin’ still.’

“If there was, he guessed he’d be the target and he didn’t want her quite so near. When they got to the cabin, she found work enough for the rest of the night—the sheriff with his eye shot out and the moonshiners, grandfather, father and son, bleeding like stuck pigs on the floor. They’ve been grateful ever since for what she did for ’em that night. And so has the sheriff, too. And so, to go back to what I said—by minding their own business in this little civil war, the Nurses have made their position strong.”

CHAPTER X

I WENT up to spend the night at the small hospital on the hill, where Mrs. Breckinridge had been engaged with the doctor and nurses that afternoon. A long two story house of stone, with eighteen beds, a babies' ward, a dispensary, a small operating room and a little wing for infectious disease, this place is an indispensable medical center for their work; for in the outlying stations, cases frequently arise that cannot be handled without a doctor and hospital care. That month two patients had been brought in, desperate maternity cases, who might otherwise have died. The hospital has three nurses, a resident physician and a consulting surgeon in a mining town twenty-three miles away. He can make the trip quickly nowadays, for there is a new motor road, dynamited out of the hills at a cost of \$27,000 a mile. Hundreds of patients have been sent out for free special treatment at hospitals in distant cities, the local railroads supplying passes for the patient and the nurse.

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And whole convoys of children have been sent to the children's hospitals of Louisville and Cincinnati, where free care has been given each child.

The little Hyden hospital, too, takes all children free of charge. Adults pay only a dollar a day, and there are still smaller charges to those who come for treatment at the summer clinics, held by visiting doctors and surgeons, well known city specialists in obstetrics, gynaecology, trachoma, hookworm, orthopedics, pediatrics, dentistry and nose and throat and eye and ear. They hold travelling clinics, too, at the smaller stations up in the hills. The State Dental Association sends a dentist for four months a year, the Service sharing in the expense; and he gave dental care last year to nearly seven hundred children, combatting at an early age conditions that leave many mountaineers almost toothless in their twenties.

To a tonsil clinic one year came about two hundred children, brought in by the nurses on wagons and carts. Nearly a hundred and fifty operations were performed under local anaesthesia, but not one of the small patients made a whimper through it all. One little girl got up from the chair, with eyes streaming tears and lips frothing blood, and said simply:

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"Thank you, doctor." And another, for an hour or more, kept exclaiming softly: "Oh, mercy me! My neck is sore!"

All of the children were kept three days and were then returned in convoys under nurses to their homes, without one case of hemorrhage or accident of any kind.

The clinics drew over six thousand men and women and children that year. The Service gave dressing and nursing treatments to 2059 and treated about four thousand other patients in various ways.

Here are a few typical cases I jotted down from the reports. An exhausted young mother resting after a case of childbirth complicated by T. B. A haggard man fighting pneumonia. A small boy and girl with the same disease, brought in by a courier on horseback. A six-year-old boy, with a skin like parchment and a blood count down to twenty, from profound anemia, due to hookworm, the common pest. And near him a baby getting over a double mastoiditis, with its hearing badly impaired. An emergency appendix case, that had been dragged up the river by boat and then brought on a stretcher here. And a young moonshiner on a litter, carried by twenty-four of his friends in four relays of six bearers each, over rough

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trails from his mountain still. He had been shot through the abdomen by a deputy sheriff up there.

One day, from a murder trial in the courthouse down below, the sheriff, who had lost one eye, brought his jury up to the hospital. One of the jurors was a woman and she'd got something in her eye and couldn't see the murderer, he explained disgustedly. So the judge had sent her up to have it attended to. And the jury could not be parted, so the sheriff had brought them all along. Into the dispensary they came and watched with interest while the eye, which was badly inflamed, was treated. Then they went back to their murder trial.

Another woman juror was expecting a baby soon; but in spite of that, she had ridden in, on a mule, from her home on Dry Hill; for she needed the one dollar a day paid to jurors by the State. She finished her service and went home; and the next day at dawn, her husband came galloping up to the hospital, on their mule. "She's punishin' turrible!" he said. One of the hospital nurses threw a saddle on her horse and got to the case in half an hour, just before the child was born.

On another night, a nurse was summoned to the small jail in the town below, where a young

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mother lay shaking with sobs. There were ugly gashes on her throat. At her little shack that evening, eight miles up a lonely creek, her husband, a rough character, had come home crazy with liquor, she said, and had slashed at her with a knife. She had seized his shot gun from the wall and blown his head off, and then had run eight miles into town to give herself up. She kept begging them to keep her in jail, for she was in deathly terror of her husband's brother and his friends.

On my visit to the hospital that night, I found a nurse carefully feeding a wizened baby in her arms. Watching her with interest, stood two tiny children, boy and girl, just brought in by a courier. When I asked them what they had come for, the small boy looked up at me and said softly:

"We're a go'n' to be wormed."

From there I went into the babies' ward, where eight babies lay in a row of cribs.

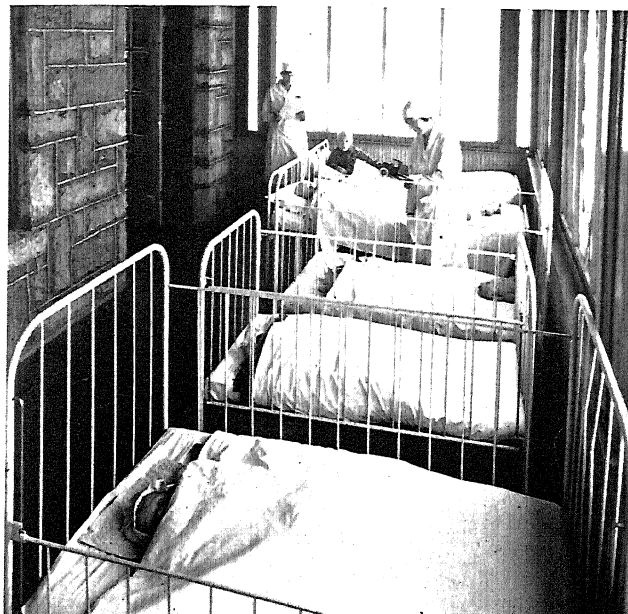
"What do you think of my family?" asked a voice behind me; and turning, I saw a husky young man, with a broad gay smile and curly black hair, propped up on pillows in a bed, in the corner by the door. When I asked him what in thunder he was doing in the babies' ward, he smiled and said: "I like it here. Me and my little

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family get on like we was all of us was twins." He had been born and raised, he said, on a creek not far from Possum Bend. Later he had left the hills and served for six years in the army. And a month ago he had come home.

"One night I got full of moonshine," he said, "an' rode in an' got shootin' up the town. I was jest havin' a little fun but the sheriff didn't see it that way. After I'd been in jail a while, another prisoner was brought in, a big red headed fellah with one black tooth. When the rest of us held a Kangaroo Court, to find out what spare cash he had for treatin' the crowd to cigarettes, he grabbed a knife out of one of his boots an' stuck it into me quite a piece—jest missin' my stomach, the doctor said, by a quarter of an inch. So he brought me up here that afternoon, an' the hospital was full, so they put me in this babies' room, an' I been here about three weeks. I been offered another bed since then but me an' the 'least ones' get on so fine that I jest can't bring myself to leave my little family. Hello, Alf. What you want now?"

Alf was a chubby four year old, who had trotted in from the toilet near by, to have his panties buttoned up. He stayed a few moments, to talk with his friend. After he'd gone, a nurse came in.



Children's Sleeping Porch at Hospital
In the Babies' Ward at Hospital



The Twins When Brought
to the Hospital

The Twins After
Treatment

Mary and Martha Morgan and Two Other Toddlers

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"Ready to feed the babies, Dick?" she asked the wounded prisoner.

"Yes, ma'am, bring 'em right along!" And he called over to the cribs: "Come on, you Simon, it's feedin' time!"

So Simon was brought over by the nurse and placed in his arms, and was soon contentedly feeding from the bottle held by the smiling young man, who had "rid in to shoot up the town." And this occurred regularly each night, till all the babies had been fed. I left him with his family.

A telephone bell rang, in the hall, and I remarked to a nurse out there that a telephone must be quite a help.

"It is, when it works," she answered, "but it reaches to only five of our centers. The current is weak; it's a party line; and every time the bell rings, all the neighbors listen in. That makes the current weaker still, so that often we can hear nothing at all. When we get an emergency call, we begin by begging all our friends and neighbors to get off the line. But it doesn't do much good—for they love to listen to hospital calls—especially those that give any news of babies about to be born!"

After supper that evening, we gathered around a fireplace, with the doctor and two of

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the nurses. One was Scotch and had trained in the Highlands. On her victrola, we heard the songs of Harry Lauder for a while; but his singing was interrupted soon, by a young English nurse, who came into the room and very nearly collapsed on the sofa.

She had just come from one of the centers, with a man so badly injured that she wanted the doctor to see him that night. He had been out possum hunting, she said, and his dog had tracked one to a hollow tree. He had climbed it with a sharpened pole, with which he meant to stir up the game, but had fallen and the sharpened pole had pierced his vitals in the fall. On reaching his cabin that afternoon, the nurse had found him in a high fever. To carry him, on a stretcher to the hospital, would have taken all night; and she had not dared to wait so long. So his brother-in-law had volunteered to bring him on his small motor truck. Three hours, it had taken them, up over the mountains in the dark, along a little wagon road, with deep holes and big boulders and terrific steep descents—four men holding to the truck, to prevent its pitching over, while the nurse, as best she could, protected her patient from the jolts, with quilts and two straw mattresses. So they had reached the hospital. And later on, I learned that the

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man had made a full recovery. One more life saved in the hills.

One of the hospital nurses, that night, told how she had been called to a cabin, on Wolf Creek, "back of the beyond," where lay a four-weeks baby. Born without a doctor and without a nurse's care, its eyes were infected and blinded with pus. She brought the tiny girl, in her arms, on horseback, to the hospital; and here, by treatments every fifteen minutes, day and night, the condition had been cleared up and the baby saved from living its life in total darkness.

From the two nurses, "Harry" and "Mac," I heard of many wild night rides, in answer to emergency calls, the nurse riding close behind a mountaineer on a galloping mule, her horse shying at "wild cucumber" leaves, enormous, white and grey, like ghosts, blown suddenly up by the night wind—or sometimes leaping nervously, at the sound of a pistol shot. For many shots are heard in the hills and the mountain horse knows what they mean. The doctor's fine mare, Lady Jean, had a sheriff's bullet still in her rump, for she had belonged to a moonshiner. I heard of "buggers" and of "hants." A man galloped in one night, on a mule, to fetch a nurse for his wife. He'd had a "turrible ride," he said, for a "bugger" had jumped on behind.

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Bravely he had shaken him off, but the persevering ghost had then grabbed the horse's tail and so had continued to "hant" the ride! This never happens to a man unless he has a guilty conscience—at least, so the "granny women" say. But to judge by the breath of the man on the mule, it was not his conscience but corn liquor that was troubling him!

I heard "Harry's" story that night. She had served on an ambulance and been wounded during the war, and she had come to Kentucky with "some bits of shrapnel left inside." The hard riding had shaken them loose and Harry had nearly lost her life. But after a major operation, now she was "quite all right again." And Harry did love her horse, she said. He was "such a spirited beast." Once he had thrown her over his head and Harry had landed on her own. Her skull had been fractured by the fall and she had been unconscious for two weeks. But she still liked him, all the same!

And I heard the story of Nancy, the gallant nurse from Ireland. But her story deserves a chapter apart.

CHAPTER XI

HANNAH O'DRISCOLL was her real name but she had always been called "Nancy," so the nurses called her that. Born in 1892, at Skibbereen in Ireland, she served three years at Malta and Constantinople, during the war, and for several years after that, with the Queen's Nurses in Manchester. She worked hard and she worked well. Her superior over there wrote of her "ability, devotion, tact and friendliness." But Nancy liked to move about this wonderful world and see new things, so later she came over here; and after working for a time, in a maternity hospital up north, she learned of the Frontier Nurses, through one of them, a friend from Scotland, who had served with her in the war. And in the fall of 1930, Nancy came down to Kentucky.

"She was shy with new people at first," said her friend, "but then her quick humor came bubbling up and the new people soon were her friends. And she worked so hard, and loved it so down here, that she made a quick start. Had

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she ridden, we asked her. Oh, yes, she had, over in Ireland long ago. And she didn't like a tame horse, so she took Dixie, at the start; and the wilder he was, the better she liked him. Falls didn't trouble her in the least. The very first time she went out with me, he threw her and she broke her nose. But on she got and we went to my case. All she had was a nose-bleed, she said. When we got home and found she was wrong, she looked at her nose in astonishment and laughed at it.

" 'Oh, is it broken?' she said. And I remember a night in December, a pitch dark night and freezing hard. About ten o'clock, a young man of nineteen came up to the hospital, on a mule, and called to me: 'Hello, hello!' His wife was about to have a baby. She was my case and I told him I'd come; but while I was getting ready, Nancy came in and heard about it.

" 'I'll just come with you! Wait!' she said. And a few minutes later, we started out.

"We had to go six miles to Bull Creek. It was pitch dark, as I said before, and my horse stumbled on the trail and threw me, tore my face a bit. I looked for Nancy but she was gone, so I mounted and went on. And I'd been on the case for over two hours, before she arrived. Riding behind me, she explained, she had taken

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a wrong turn in the dark and Dixie got lost on the mountain side.

" 'We kept coming to a cliff, and up he went each time!' she said. 'And I knew we'd been up that cliff before but I just let him take his way!'

"On he went through the thick woods. And she lost her hat and cut her face, on the branches overhead. When she got to the case at last and saw that my face was bleeding, too, she burst out laughing. Then she got to work and helped me. A fine quick worker, Nancy was. But Dixie grew sick of the cold outside, so he slipped his bridle and home he went. And after the baby had been born and the mother all attended to, we rode back together on Bessie, my mare, down Bull Creek all ashine with ice; for the weather had cleared and there was a moon. We got home for breakfast at six o'clock."

"Tell me more stories about her," I said.

"Oh, I haven't any stories," answered "Mac," the Scottish nurse. "Only just bits in the day's work."

"Give me some more bits," I urged. "What else did Dixie do with her?"

"She didn't keep him very long. He was sent back to Wendover and Nancy was given a fine black horse, named Raven. She rode him all the rest of her life. Raven liked to kick up a

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fight, when other horses were about. While I was with Nancy once, on a case, we heard a great crashing of wood outside and looked out and saw Raven and Toby, my horse, kicking out at each other, hind to hind, and smashing and pulling the picket fence down. It was all we could do to get them apart.

"Raven was wild but a splendid beast, and Nancy surely loved that horse. She loved to go down steep places, too. I remember a call we had, early one morning in the spring, in a very heavy rain. The river was up, in such a tide, you couldn't possibly swim across; so Nancy and I went up over the mountain and down by a muddy trail, so steep that our horses kept sliding. Back on their haunches they would go, and I'd hear Nancy's ringing laugh through the rain. Her service cap was over one ear and the layette, wrapped in heavy brown paper, was tucked bulging under one arm. When we came to the roaring old river below, three men were waiting, with a small flat boat. In we got, with our saddle bags that weighed nearly fifty pounds apiece, and the layette held up over our heads, to keep it out of reach of the waves that kept splashing into the boat. Down the river for three miles we dashed, shooting rapids through the rocks; and though of course we were

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drenched to the skins, Nancy considered it all grand sport! We landed at a school house and took mules to Henry Couch's. There we crossed in another boat and reached our case in time to catch a nine pound boy at noon.

"Nancy worked hard and she worked well. And she kept such accurate records of every case coming under her care that, when our superior checked them up at the time of her death, she found not an omission or mistake. But hard as she worked, she took it lightly. Her sense of humor was never far off. When an anxious man would come for her, off she would go with him to his wife and work all day on a desperate case; and then she would come home in the dark; and when we'd ask her where she'd been—

" 'Oh, accompanied by the curate,' she'd say. She loved to hear songs on my Victrola. When Harry Lauder was singing one night, I said I'd have only Scotch tunes in Heaven. And then Nancy said to me: 'But you'll play the Irish ones for me, Mac!' She was a beautiful dancer, too. And she had a big book about flowers, in which she used to press and dry the wild flowers she found on her rides. She had another book on the stars, and she would go up to the top of the hill and look at them, on a clear still

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night. The people liked Nancy and she liked them—although she saw them just as they were, the good and bad, the weak and the strong. She faced life in all its situations. And no matter how ugly it might be, she was always interested.

"I remember one wild Sunday night. There'd been some stabbing over a feud and a man half full of moonshine came galloping up here, on a mule. His friend had been stabbed five times, he said, and once just below the heart. We saddled our horses and went on the run. Our guide was using only one stirrup. With the other, he kept beating his mule. When we got to the place, a crowd came running; and by the cabin stood a man, ringing a cow bell.

" 'Help!' he kept shouting. 'Somebody help!'

"We hurried in and found a young wife wringing her hands. Her husband lay bleeding on the floor. We managed to stop the bleeding soon and made him more comfortable until a doctor could reach the spot. But Nancy then got interested in an old couple sitting there. The granny told how, when she was young, she grew jealous of her husband and ripped out his insides with a knife. And the two old people both laughed at the memory till the tears rolled out of their eyes! 'It cost all the money we had in the world but it was worth it!' the granny said.

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And Nancy watched in a curious way these specimens of humanity. 'Yes, I suppose it was,' she said. 'You see? They're that kind of people,' she told me, on the way home at the end of the night. 'It takes all kinds of people to make a world—and what a funny world it is!'

"But though she knew life both good and bad, it was the good that she believed in. 'That's the realest part of the world,' she said. All over the district the children were crazy about 'the red haired nurse.' Often I've seen her riding home with six 'least ones' on her horse, three before and three behind. She always *carried* her service cap.

" 'Why do you take it?' I asked her once. 'You never wear it.'

" 'Oh,' she said, 'I think the world of my fine cap. I just don't want it on my head!'

"She had lovely red hair and she liked to let the wind have a chance to blow it about. But she was so short sighted, she couldn't see things on the ground. Once I saw a snake down there.

" 'Look out,' I called. 'There's a copper-head!'

" 'I don't see any snake,' she said.

" 'He's right down there in front of your horse!'

" 'I'll just have a look!' she said. And before

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I could stop her, off she jumped. He struck at her but she sprang aside, and then she said, admiringly: 'Oh, is that a copperhead?'

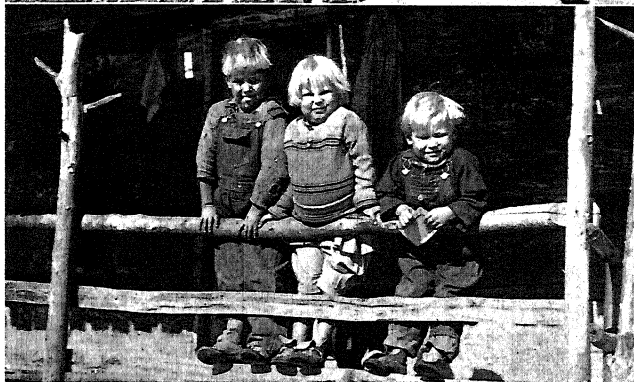
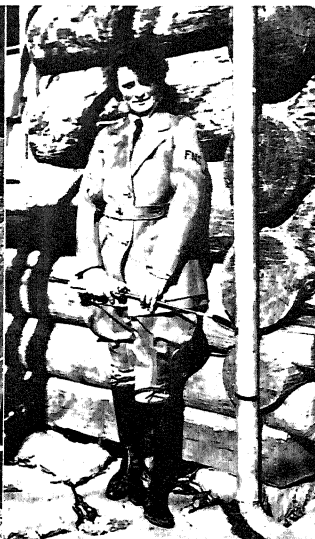
"Another time, on a windy day, we were riding down from a ridge and Nancy was ahead of me. All at once she stood up in her stirrups and began to wave her cap.

" 'What are you doing that for?' I asked.

" 'Can't you see? It's a patient—waving to us from across the valley,' she replied. I looked.

" 'Oh, no, it isn't,' I said. 'It's a man's shirt out on the line.'

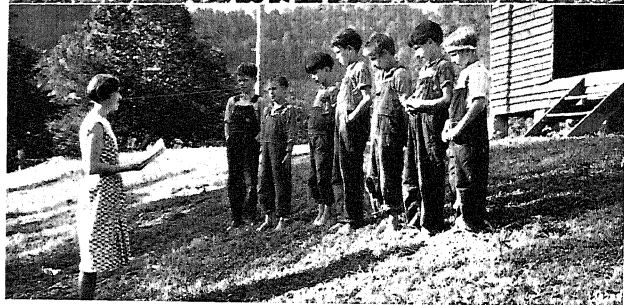
"But they often did wave to her, all the same, and come out to chat when she rode by; and whenever they needed a nurse, they would ask for the red headed one. They liked her and they liked her work. She was straight as a die, with those she served, and never spoiled them. Indeed, she bullied them instead. But they came by scores to her clinic at Cutshin. The clinic there was her own idea. We warned her against it at the start, for Cutshin was a long way off, in a lonely district of the hills; and to get there, your horse had to climb up over some of our steepest mountains and ford the river twice besides. More than once, with my heart in my mouth, I've watched Nancy swim her horse over the wildest river in spring. Nothing could



Old Midwife and her Grand-
daughter, now in Care of
the Frontier Nurses

Nancy O'Driscoll

Children in Cabin on Hurricane Creek



A Frontier Nurse in a Mountain Home
Nancy O'Driscoll's Clinic at Cutshin
A Mountain School

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keep her away from her clinic. The mothers and children over there had no other medical care. They needed her. And that was enough. They gave her a room in a cabin and she brought curtains, a table and chairs, and made a nice little clinic there. And men, women and children from miles around used to gather once a week and crowd around that cabin door. Roars of laughter came from inside, with Nancy's voice talking fast through it all. Joking and talking as she worked, she made it for them and for herself 'a marine holiday,' as she said. So her clinic kept growing month by month.

" 'If anything should ever happen that I couldn't go,' she said, 'you'd go with Toby, wouldn't you, Mac?'

" 'What do you mean?' I asked her. She only smiled and tossed her head.

" 'Oh, you never know in this world,' she replied, 'what's going to happen from day to day.'

"Now and then, as time went on, she began to have a pain in her side. She made light of it and went on with her work, and she rode away one morning, without ever telling us that she was having another attack. She had not only her clinic, that day, but three maternity patients to examine, before and after birth. The two

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pre-natals weren't coming just right and Nancy was keeping an eye on them. Her pain must have grown to an agony—but still she kept on about her work and didn't get home till the edge of the dark. Our local committee of mountaineers was coming to supper here that night, but Nancy went up to her room.

“‘I feel pretty bad,’ she told me. ‘Please ask them to excuse me tonight. I’ll just have some tea and go to bed.’

“The next day, she was so much worse that the doctor examined her and found that she had appendicitis. The surgeon from Hazard came over and operated right away, but he found that, on her last ride, she had ruptured her appendix. For days and nights she lay in the shadow. Some of us were with her all the time and the doctor barely left her side. She begged me once to go and see those two pre-natals. I went and came back and reassured her. They were doing fine, I said. Then I spoke of Raven, her horse.

“‘I’ll never ride him again,’ she said. But most of the time, she lay still and fought for the one slim chance she knew she had. Hour by hour, though, she grew worse; and in her delirium, she rode Raven down the cliffs and swam him over swollen tides and went into cabins and talked to her patients. Her thoughts

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kept flying out to them, to the mothers and babies most of all, and she tried to get up and go to them. Between her spells of delirium, she insisted on giving directions about each case to the nurse who was relieving her. Not once did she ask anything for herself.

"Many of her patients came here, after she was gone. Pearl Lewis came, with tears in his eyes.

" 'I don't feel like I ever want to come to Hyden any more,' he told me. 'She saved my woman.'

"So many others felt like that. Over at Cushman, the fathers are building a clinic in her memory. When she died, she was taken down to Lexington, for burial. Nearly three hundred mountaineers followed the stretcher, on which she lay, as she was carried down the winding path, through the village and so to the motor road. Behind her rode a part of our corp—but first of all, just behind the bier, walked slowly Raven, her black horse, with stirrups crossed over the empty saddle—just as they do in the army, I'm told."

For Nancy's life had been the kind that Stevenson was thinking of, when he wrote in one of his books:

"Life is a thing to be dashingly used and cheerfully hazarded. It's an affair of cavalry."

CHAPTER XII

WE had planned to ride next morning over the hills to the nursing center at Brutus, some twenty miles away. There, though the neighboring mountaineers had donated the land and much of the lumber, the expense of the building had been borne by the Hughitt family in Chicago, in memory of their mother, who had been a Kentuckian. They were to be there the next day to see it dedicated. They wanted a clergyman for that, and so one from a neighboring mining town motored up to join us at the hospital that night. He belonged to the Disciples of Christ. He was a short stocky man with a broad quiet smile and twinkling eyes; and I liked the way he took the news of the five hour horseback ride next day.

"I reckon that's quite a ride," he drawled. "And I haven't been on a horse in ten years. But after all, I was raised in Kentucky."

A pair of overalls was procured and he was ready for the trip. We arose next morning at five in the dark and, after a quick breakfast, took out to the stable our saddle bags and were off

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just after dawn. It was drizzling. It was muggy and warm. But climbing by steep winding trails up Thousand Sticks Mountain to the ridge, we came into high country. The rain stopped and it was cooler there. Fine forests stretching down below us, for some time we rode along, into little upland valleys and again up onto ridges, which in places narrowed to long ledges with huge rocky nobbs—good look-out stations for moonshiners. We passed several little caves and two or three deserted cabins. We met nobody. It was still. In the trees we heard no birds and our dog stirred up no game. And so it was all morning. We rode through virgin forests of beech and oak and walnut, giant and majestic trees, lovely things, that autumn day. Forests once so rich in game, in the days of Daniel Boone. All shot away. It was so still! On our whole ride, I saw only one squirrel, peeping at us over a boulder.

But as our trail wound down along one of the wooded slopes of a creek, we met a little bevy of very wild and very shy and very tiny mountaineers. I took a snapshot from the saddle and I heard their low soft voices excitedly talking after we'd gone. We passed several cabins now, and near one of them we came to a small fenced enclosure with some thirty or forty

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stones. Most of them were *little* stones and they marked the graves of children. And the preacher at my side, who had a small mission in the hills, spoke of the all day funerals that he had seen at points like this.

"Several neighboring families will wait till a number of deaths have occurred—maybe for three or four years," he said. "Then they'll send out for a preacher or two, and hundreds of friends and relatives will ride in from miles away. Among them there will be a couple of funeral orators, to help the preachers from outside; and from morning until night there'll be sermons of one or two hours each—old-fashioned religion, hot and strong. These people seem to enjoy it, too. They'll crowd it all into one day—then wait till the next funeral time."

Mary Breckinridge that morning told me of the numberless deaths occurring from T. B. For the Great White Plague has spread through the mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee.

"Hundreds of children are stricken," she said, "and so little can be done for them in their crowded drafty homes. So they grow worse and soon infect others in the family. I remember a little boy of ten, who had T. B., and whose two brothers had already died of it. He came

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to Wendover one day; and at the end of his visit, he said:

“ ‘Well, now I’m going home to die. Everybody in our house dies.’ ”

“We’ve been able to help a few such cases by sending them out of the hills to places where they get adequate care. But for every life we save, ten are lost—and needlessly lost—just because we haven’t the funds to tackle this problem in a big way. Our State can do little. Kentucky is poor and they get almost nothing in taxes up here. But I’m hoping at least to make a start in an anti-tuberculosis campaign. Most of the cabins, as you have seen, are down by the creek bottoms, misty and damp so much of the time. My plan is for a big summer camp up in the sun, on some high plateau. I’ve picked out the very spot. There, from May to November, I want to take three or four hundred children, in early stages of the disease, house them in open cabins around a larger central building, keep them for six months, spring, summer and fall, and so give them a chance for their lives. Of course later on we shall need other camps and a special hospital, too. But we’ll have to wait some time, I’m afraid, for money is so hard to find, these days.”

We did little talking after that, but rode on in

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silence, breathing in the loveliness of the forests and the hills. The sun came out and the day grew warm. Our horses were thirsty. We stopped to let them drink at a ford. And turning in her saddle, she said:

"I love these rides. Without them I don't know how I'd get along. So many worries drop away—such little worries, all so small. At times like this, as Emerson says, God puts out a great cool hand and asks us: 'Why so hot, little man?' And one cools down and begins to see through the troubling surface of things—through today into tomorrow—into life as it can be."

One of the loveliest forests, that day, stood on the slopes of a winding ravine, cut deep down into the hills by the famous Hell-fer-Sartain Creek, which John Fox Junior wrote about. It's a friendly little stream at the start, but far below it narrows to a deep and ugly gulch of broken rock and mammoth boulders, dangerous going for horse or man. So Hell-fer-Sartain it was called; and the local post office was called that, too, until the federal government noticed the profane little name and very hastily had it changed to one more respectable!

We did not follow it for long. Coming down to a little valley, we passed a log school and a small church mission; and then, climbing once

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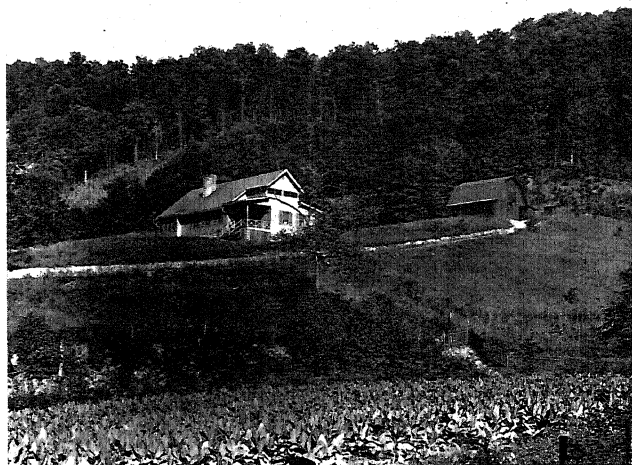
again by an almost perpendicular trail, we went over a ridge by a gap and descended through a maze of branches to the valley of Big Bullskin Creek. I remember a saw mill that we passed, and a small mill for grinding corn; and at a crossing of trails we came to a little general store. Its owner, I learned, had started life as one of the poorest of the poor; but in twenty hard shrewd years, he had bought or built half a dozen such stores; so now he had a substantial home and was on his way to becoming the first chain store magnate in the hills. He owned thousands of acres of good land, too, and he paid a federal tax on a five thousand dollar income last year. What a museum exhibit he would be for the city of New York, these days!

On the valley road, we let out our horses and, trotting and cantering for a few miles, we followed the widening valley down to the nursing center at Brutus, arriving a little before noon. It was an attractive cottage, set on high ground above the road. After five hours in the saddle, we would have welcomed a little rest. But the group from Chicago was there, having motored in the night before; and around the house were several hundred men and women and children, waiting for the dedication. So, after we had unsaddled and rubbed down our weary mounts,

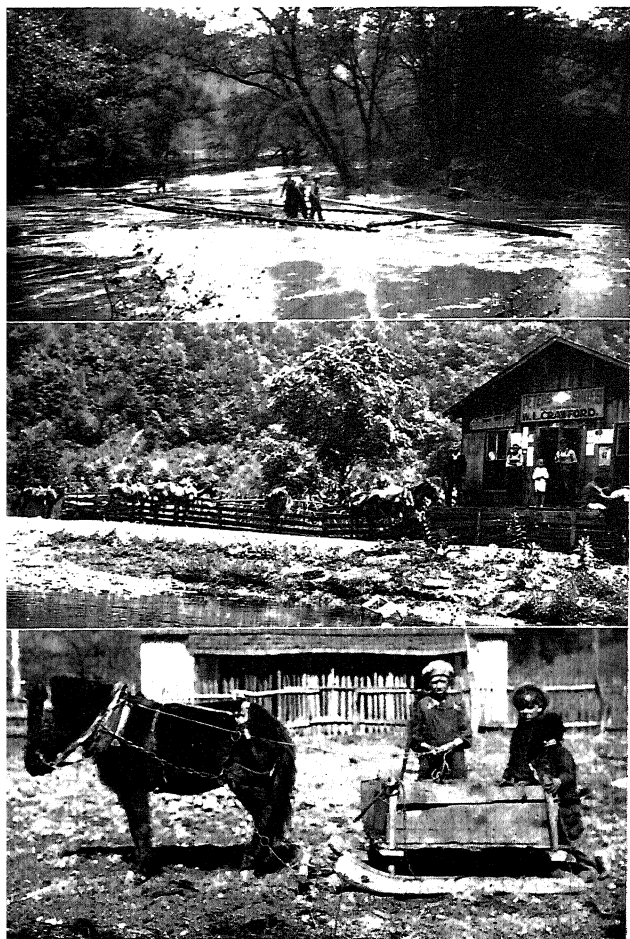
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turned them into pasture and brought to the house our saddle bags, we took a hasty luncheon and then the ceremonies began. During the good speeches made by my fellow riders and by leading mountaineers, my main attention went to the silent listeners massed upon the hillside, standing or sitting on the brown turf, with two score of babies held in arms. Every few moments one started to wail, but quickly it was rocked and hushed. And that deep stillness came again, as those four hundred mountaineers, the big ones and the little ones, listened to what Mary Breckinridge said about this work and these practical plans for human life and happiness.

Among those people so intent, I began to notice sharp contrasts. Those from the more fertile farms, stretching down the valley road, could feed and clothe their families so much better than the rest. They had fair crops of corn that year, and some rye and Burley tobacco, which they could sell at a good price, for use in cigarettes; though to do so, they had to haul it nearly a hundred miles, I learned; and to raise it, took a lot of care and was exhausting to the soil. Nevertheless they looked pretty well off. But they were in the minority. And those who had ridden down from the hills—from tiny



Clinic at Brutus Center
The Center at Brutus



Logging on Red Bird River

A Crossroads Store

One of the Sledges Commonly Used on Mountain Trails
Instead of Wagons

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farms on meager soil and from forests where, on account of the Drought, there had been little logging last winter and there would be still less this year—they looked desperately poor. Men with faces gaunt and lean and shoulders bent by heavy labor. Tired mothers, pallid babies, children puny and raggedly clothed. But when those children massed together, with their teachers leading them in the usual national airs, then it seemed to me that I caught a different kind of hunger there. And this feeling seemed to come to them from one of the teachers, who stood in front, a slim young woman with a quick smile and resolute attractive eyes.

I saw more of her later that day, for her husband owned a farm close by. He had a small motor truck, too, and did a little trucking business. She herself had spent three years as a girl at a large and flourishing "settlement school," on the edge of the hills, which took mountain children to board at from six to twelve dollars a month. There she had learned a lot of things about cooking and sewing and keeping a house, and from books and moving pictures about the life of the world outside. And so she had come back with new ideas. She loved this valley. It was her home. She meant to stay here all her life. But life was to be different here, different

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for and through these children, whom she taught in the public school.

Since the nursing center was crowded that night, the preacher and I went down to sleep at her three-room cabin on the valley road below. She and her husband slept that night with their two little children and gave us their room, a square room with brown log walls and a sandstone fireplace, in which a couple of chunky logs kept softly burning through the night. A clean plank floor, a couple of chairs, a bureau, washstand and double bed, one of the most comfortable beds a tired rider ever slept in.

Before I went to sleep, however, a slow drowsy drawling voice, from the other side of the big bed, began a brief conversation, which is worth recording here.

"Well, brother, it's been quite a day. And I reckon you're sleepy. So am I. But I'm starting back home pretty early tomorrow—and there's a question I'd like to ask. How many of you modern story writers go to church?"

"Mighty few of us," I said. And then I yawned. And so did he.

"Better go once or twice—just to see what it's like. Go and hear Fosdick, up there in New York, and try to get a little idea of how some preachers are looking at life. You may find

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quite a considerable change from the preaching you used to hear as a boy."

"You fellows getting modern, too?"

"Not all of us. In one of his books, Fosdick quotes from a Baptist paper in West Kentucky. 'Baptists have the whole truth,' it said. 'Nobody else has. And West Kentucky Baptists come nearer standing for the whole truth and all the truth than any other set of Baptists in this whole round world.'" My bed-fellow chuckled to himself. "But most of the fellows in pulpits, these days, have come a long way from that point of view. It's mighty easy to narrow down, in a church in a small town, but a lot of us keep fighting against it. I spend my vacations in Louisville, taking university courses in subjects that seem to bear on religion—Jeans, for example, and Edington, and other modern scientists—fellows who seem to be groping their way back to God again in the universe. And take even a writer like Sinclair Lewis. Happen to know him?"

"Yes," I replied. My bed-fellow chuckled again and said:

"Next time you see him, insult him for me. Tell him he's a religious man."

That hit me. I quickly opened my eyes.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

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"I mean that behind all his savage attacks lies the cause of 'em," the preacher said. "Lewis wants a better world than the one we're living in." I took this in, and then I asked:

"How many like you are preaching, these days?"

"Thousands," came the drawled reply. "But most of you modern writers quit going to church before we began. Give us a chance at you now and then. You might find you'd be interested." He gave a comfortable yawn. "Good-night, brother—I'm mighty sleepy—and I reckon you are, too."

And there our conversation died. For several minutes I lay awake, thinking of what I had just heard. But very soon my thoughts grew blurred. Drowsily I cursed the cat, who whined and scratched upon the screen of the small open window. The night air poured in crisp and cold, but we had several blankets and a big soft crazy quilt. I pulled it just a little farther over to my side of the bed, robbing the slumbering man of God. And I had a wonderful sleep that night.

Long before daylight, I was roused by a sound I've always liked, so different from motor cars, the light pattering thud of horses' hoofs on the dirt road close outside. Every few minutes a rider came by. I heard children's voices in the

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house and then their mother's, keeping them low on our account. I heard the small family rise in the dark. Sounds of washing and of cooking. Daylight came. My companion awoke and got up and closed the window, put a log on the fire, dressed and went out. But I was lazy. The bed was so warm and I liked so much those southern voices, low and soft, from the other room.

At last I arose. It was after six. My hospitable young hostess offered to cook me a breakfast then, but the family had long since finished theirs and I did not want to bother her. I asked her to show me how she had made that double bed so comfortable. On the springs, I learned, was a straw mattress. Three crazy quilts lay on top of that and over them was carefully spread her mother's feather mattress, only about three inches thick and kept even by patting every few days. In her kitchen, she had a fine new stove. The whole cabin was fresh and clean, and so were the baby girl and the boy, about four years old. I took his picture before I left. I was sorry to leave. And when people in dirty noisy cities ask me what's the use of trying to help Kentucky mountaineers, I remember that cabin, those soft low voices, that young mother's friendly smile and the light in her bright resolute eyes.

CHAPTER XIII

AT the nursing center that day, before we left, I learned more about the life and work of a Frontier Nurse. All the outlying stations, though quite different from one another in appearance and in size, conform to the same general plan—a comfortable living room, with an open fire and a sofa and some easy chairs and a dining table at one side, three or four bedrooms and a bath, a dispensary, a large waiting room, with a cot for sick or tired mothers and a model baby's crib, a pleasant porch for the hot summers and a small frame barn close by. At each center are two nurses, and the cooking and housekeeping are done by a young mountain girl. Each center is run with the coöperation of a local committee, which meets there for dinner four times a year. And one of them has a mother's club. But the big time for visitors is at the weekly clinic, from early morning until noon and often till long after that. For to save needless horseback rides, the busy nurses on their rounds keep urging patients to "come to

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the clinic." I heard that phrase so many times. And the clinics have steadily grown, with the years, until now there will be fifty or more women and children and a few men, riding or walking in from the hills.

But others are too sick to come, or too busy with their work at home. And so, in each center, the two nurses are still in the saddle most of the day and cover between them an area of about eighty square miles, in a radius of five, each having her own district and helping the other when there is need. They are licensed by the State to care for normal deliveries; and in cases of illness, they follow a "medical routine," drawn up by the Medical Advisory Committee, allowing them to give to the sick certain treatments, pending the arrival of physicians from outside. Each nurse has two pairs of saddlebags, one for general nursing and the other for midwifery; and she keeps them always ready, for she is on duty day and night. She saddles, feeds and grooms her own horse, and the horse must be fed before seven o'clock, in order that she may get a "soon start."

"As our staff has grown," Mrs. Breckinridge said, "we've kept several horses in reserve, for they haven't the resistance of nurses and they need more frequent relief."

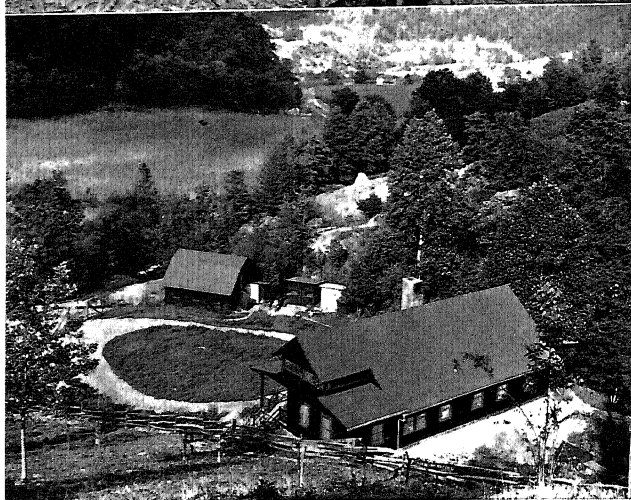
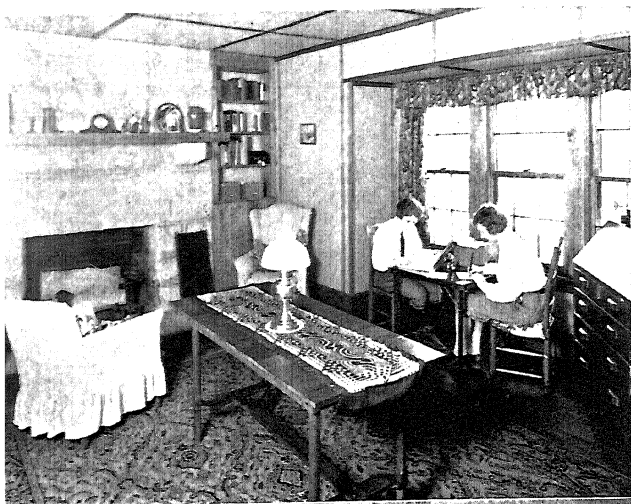
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But she insists that each one of her nurses take a vacation of six weeks a year, and preferably in two parts. For the strain upon them is often terrific, for weeks together at a time. In winter, when more babies are born than in all the rest of the year, the rivers, creeks and branches fill with ice and slush and snow; and the horses, though they are shod with ice nails, often slip and stumble and crash through with bleeding hocks. For protection, their legs are rubbed with heavy blue ointment every few days; but even so, they often go lame and have to be relieved for a time, leaving the nurse to continue her arduous duties on a fresh mount. She wears in the wet weather a huge rubber hood and cape, patterned after those in use by the Canadian Mounted Police.

We wore such capes ourselves, that morning, starting out in a drizzling rain for the station on Red Bird River, about twelve miles away. Turning in from the valley road, our trail led up a wet creek bed, with mud and clay and broken rocks, a picket fence on either side and corn fields sodden in the rain. We walked our horses. Splash of hoofs. From the porch of a big grey cabin of logs, a middle-aged woman called to us; and reining up by the picket fence, my companion talked with her a while. I heard a



Red Bird Center
Red Bird Center Living Room



Nurses Writing Up Their Records at Flat Creek Center
Flat Creek Center

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good many such talks that morning; for, from other lonely cabins, women came out, young and old, from slim young mothers of sixteen to gnarled old grannies of eighty or more. All seemed to know Mary Breckinridge and wanted to stop her as she passed. More than one invited us in. Dinner would be ready soon. Although every cabin had been helped again and again by the Service, in sickness and in sorrow, in dire destitution and pain, and though they knew this woman, both for her present leadership and her name, so long prominent in their State, never once was there the slightest hint that these women felt her to be either an Angel of Mercy or a Lady Bountiful. She was simply a neighbor on horseback, speaking their language, talking to equals, joking and gossiping, bringing them news, or giving advice to those who were sick, as a licensed midwife and trained nurse. She admires Thomas Jefferson, with whom her great-great-grandfather served; and her democracy is like his, with a quality of gallantry that throws completely out of the picture the Lady Bountiful idea. She thoroughly enjoyed those talks. The only fellow who did not was Dixie, her horse, who hated to stand and who wanted to run, on a good level road!

But he had to wait long for his run that day,

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for from the creek we climbed by a trail straight up a high mountain side, along one slope of a great deep gulch, with a rocky cliff on the opposite side. So we reached the ridge of Flat Top Mountain. I had looked forward to that flat top, for I am fond of horses and my little mare was breathing hard. But the name was a joke on both of us, for the "flat top" was just ten feet wide, and from there, we turned down a forest path so close to perpendicular that I dismounted in disgust. I don't care to take a somersault over any horse's head and then have him take one over mine. At the end of that long descent, we rode through a forest of grand dripping trees into a labyrinth of branches of creeks, splashing across the little fords. A lonely region, lean and poor. Poor cabins. Sickness. Poverty. Democracy. More neighborly talks. My companion knew their language so well that she unconsciously used it herself and spoke in the vernacular.

"I feel like I was kin to them," she said to me, as we rode on.

By Lower Jack's Creek, we came at noon onto the Red Bird River road, with its valley of more prosperous farms. And the rain had stopped and we let out our horses, and Dixie at last enjoyed himself, at such a pace that it was all

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my mare could do to keep up with him. And so we reached our stopping place, in ample time for lunch at one.

The Red Bird nursing center, a roomy cabin of brown logs, given by Mrs. Henry Ford and set on a hillside among the trees, with a lovely view of the valley below, seemed to me about the most livable and attractive center of them all. And this was due both to the house itself and to the two English nurses—"Johnny" and Vanda they were called—who had made it so homelike inside. One of them had served in France with Mrs. Breckinridge, after the war. It was a fine place for a weary rider to rest in, that rainy afternoon; and I had a good long talk with a young physician from the North, who had just finished medical school and was putting in a few months down there, before beginning as interne in a Boston hospital.

"The people know I'm staying here and helping in the work," he said, "and through the nurses, they've learned so well the value of such work as this that, when I ride up a creek to a patient, they'll notice me pass; and on my way back, I'll find half a dozen sick people and kids, who have been carried down the branches for me to look at, when I come by. I've seen a lot of cases that way. I'm finding a good deal of

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trouble with eyes and throat and lungs down here, and I think one cause of it is these smoky cabins. Over half of 'em have no windows. The people shut their doors at night and go to bed about seven o'clock, and the smoke from soft coal fires gets blown back into the room. They sleep ten hours or more a night, and maybe that accounts for the fact that they seem to have no nerves at all, when it comes to standing pain. But mighty few of the men and boys go to much trouble about keeping clean. A mountain kid, who's a friend of mine, dropped in here to see me one night before supper. I'd been in the saddle most of the day and was having a wash and changing my clothes. He sat there and watched with interest.

"'You're a heap of trouble to yourself, ain't you?' he said, after a while.

"Not only the women here but the men are all mighty fond of their kids. You even have to stop a father rocking a sick child too much in his arms. Once you've got their confidence, they'll do their best to follow any directions you may give. But most of 'em can't see any use in washing in the winter time; and in those crowded cabins, it wouldn't be easy if they did.

"I went to a cabin last week," he continued.

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"The nurse had been there the week before and given a shot of T. A. T. to all the kids in the family. And I was to give 'em the second shot. I'd been told there were seven. I fixed up six, then looked for the seventh and was told that Obed had 'clim up a tree.' Obed was only five years old and you could barely see him, up near the top of that big persimmon. But I shinned up and brought him down and he took his shot like a man."

That evening after supper, with rain still pouring down outside, we sat around a big log fire with the doctor and both nurses, for they had no calls that night. Remembering how the old native midwives delivered not only women but cows, I asked if the nurses were ever invited to help out nature in the barn.

"Oh, yes, indeed, I have been," Vanda answered, with a smile. "But the only time I ever did, was when I brought into the world a dear little pig, the last of the litter. Since then, I've been deaf to all such invitations. We've our hands full as it is."

And in proof of what she said, they showed Mrs. Breckinridge a letter that had just arrived, by the daily mail on muleback, from the superintendent of public schools in a neighboring district. A typhoid epidemic had begun at

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the Mill Creek High School, he wrote, between Bright Shade and Mud Lick Creeks, which was about ten miles away, and also at two smaller schools, at Asker's Fork and Indian Grave Branch. Would the nurses come over and inoculate the children?

"If you will," he wrote, "I'll have them all here at the high school to get the shot."

So "Johnny" and Vanda had arranged that, while Vanda stayed at home, to look after the maternity cases and the general local work, "Johnny" would ride over, with a plentiful supply of vaccines in her saddle-bags, inoculate for typhoid and give T. A. T. in the other arm. And she would give T. A. T. to the babies and "toddlers," too. Several hundred children in all. It would be a busy day. She would have to go over twice again, giving three shots to every child. And this was out of her district, she said, and was only one of many calls for help that came from regions outside. For the fame of the nurses has spread far and wide. I inquired what the Service charged for inoculations and I learned that it was only five cents a shot.

Then "Johnny" told me of a call for inoculations at Horse Creek. After twelve deaths from diphtheria, the school superintendent asked her to come. How many children would there be?

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About two hundred, he replied. The first time she went over, she found about three hundred and fifty; on her next trip, nearly five hundred; and seven hundred on her third! Of course this meant that she must make two or three visits later on. Many had come fifteen miles. Long rows of mules at the high school fence and nearly a thousand children and parents waiting there expectantly!

"I never could have done it," she said, "if that man and his teachers hadn't given me such splendid help. We got it all well organized. One teacher lined them up by schools and the superintendent stood at the door, to keep them from crowding in too fast. There were seven other teachers inside. One took the names of the children and another collected the nickels of those who could afford to pay. And about three-fourths of them did. A third kept sterilizing my needles, a fourth filled the typhoid syringes and a fifth those for diphtheria, a sixth teacher held the child and a seventh painted his arm with mercurochrome. We worked all day and got half through. I stayed and finished the next afternoon. Then I started home to rest. But my horse had been given bean hay over there, so he developed colic. It was all I could do to get him here. Then I called in some neighbors to

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help, and we walked and dosed and rubbed that horse for the greater part of the night!"

They told me still another story having to do with T. A. T. Vanda had inoculated a family of children nearby. When she went to give the second shot, she found the mother was not at home. On her ride back, she met the father and asked him to bring the children to her clinic, the next day. The mountaineer looked up at her and spoke in an even quiet tone.

"I don't believe I can do it tomorrow. I've just killed a man," he said, "and I'm on my way to give myself up. But I'll see that they come to you in a few days."

Vanda discovered that his wife had left him, on the day before, and gone to live with another man, and her husband had followed her over there and had shot and killed her lover. He gave himself up, was let out on bail and later, at the trial, was acquitted. His wife, in the meantime, had disappeared; and so, with the help and advice of the nurse, he had cared for the children ever since. In payment for her services, he brought a chicken now and then. For money, in his cabin, was as scarce as a hen's teeth.

"I had a sight of money once but I run through it," he explained. The fortune he had

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squandered had been sixteen dollars, he said. Currency is rarely seen. The natives resort to barter instead.

"We've had checks," said Mrs. Breckinridge, "that have gone uncashed for nearly a year and have then come back to us from the bank, with a score of endorsements on the back. They have been circulated like cash."

Most of the patients pay the nurses either in labor or in kind. To one of the centers not long ago a father brought three guinea hens, in payment for his nine-pound boy. And a mother, who had worried two years, because she could not pay the fee for her last confinement, arrived at last in triumph, with a wagonload of fodder for the nurses' horses. She brought a second load, that day, and put them both into the barn—then lit her pipe, with a sigh of content. The baby at last was paid for!

At Red Bird, most of the tables, the presses in the bedrooms and also the splint-bottom chairs, had been made by local mountaineers; and so had the desk in the living room—hand planed, a lovely piece of work; while the bedroom rugs had been woven on a hand loom at Big Creek and the linen cloths on the dining table had also been woven somewhere nearby. The nurses had two clinic days, on Wednesday and on Saturday,

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and patients had brought them at such times, either for sale or in payment of debts, squirrel and coon and fox skins, crazy quilts and fire wood, potatoes, corn and melons, chickens, ducks and bull-frogs.

At breakfast, before we left next day, with our eggs and bacon we had some delicious little squirrels, which a hunter had brought in. An insult to a poor little squirrel to sell him for only fifteen cents, but that was the regular charge, I learned. So scarce is money in the hills!

CHAPTER XIV

OUR ride next morning lay up the Red River, by a dirt road which wound along, now on this side, now on that, with fords across the shallow stream. The river had gone nearly dry; for until the day before, there had been no rain for weeks. But it was here and on the Middle Fork River, during the spring before, when the heavens opened at last in heavy rains to end the Great Drought, that enormous rafts of logs, till then imprisoned in the hills, came rushing down on the roaring flood; and men at their ploughs and women and children, working in gardens or in cabins, waved their hats to the raftsmen and cheered, because the long black nightmare of famine, pestilence and death was over and new life was here. Since then, the corn crop had been good and the valley farms had food enough, at least for the winter months ahead.

Near one large cabin that we passed, I noticed two rows of "bee-gums," huge round logs

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about three feet long, cut from gum trees and hollowed out and set on end for bees to live in. Having only about ten miles to go to the station at Flat Creek, we took it easy, that morning, walking our horses much of the way. And speaking of the stories that I had heard the night before, Mrs. Breckinridge told me how often such demands for help kept pouring in from regions outside. So urgent had been such requests, from the district of Flat Creek just ahead, and so pressing was the need, that long before the new station was built, two nurses had moved over there, and had lived for half a year in a three-room cabin on Hog Wallow Branch—white-washing the walls, creosoting the floors and nailing narrow strips of wood over the most gaping cracks to keep out the winter air from below. But even so, the icy wind kept billowing up the rug on the floor. The water they used had all to be boiled, for it came from an infected well. Within the first ten days after their arrival, five maternity patients had registered. Among them was a young woman, who lived in a one-room shack and slept in a huge double bed, with her husband and four children—the whole family so anaemic, from hookworm and poor nourishment, that the man had not even energy enough to make another bed.

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"They sound like rather a hopeless lot," I remarked to Mrs. Breckinridge. "What can you do for people like that?"

"We can rid them of hookworm," she replied, "and remove the main cause of their hopelessness."

In a cabin not far off, she went on, three children were found with scarlet fever; so one of the nurses had to drop all other work to look after them. One was desperately ill, yet she managed to pull all three of them through, although the nearest doctor, in a town some twenty miles away, could make but a single visit during their entire illness.

Since then, the new center, the Caroline Butler Atwood Memorial, had been built, on land given by a mountaineer and with labor and materials contributed by others there, while the ten thousand dollars needed to build and equip the center was given by two Kentucky women in memory of their mother. We arrived there about noon. In the waiting room by the dispensary, I noticed the same screened baby crib made of native hickory, which I had seen at the other centers and which the nurses recommend to protect against the flies and mosquitoes that bring typhoid into the cabins. This crib had a huge doll inside, used by the nurses in their talks to moth-

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ers about the care of babies. One of them told me how she had tried in vain to persuade a father to make a screened crib for his new-born son—until one day she found him making one out by the barn.

"It ain't the flies I'm thinkin' of, it's snakes," he told her. And he explained that, on the day before, his wife had found a big black snake with the baby, in the capacious bed, where parents and baby slept together.

While we lunched with the nurses, that day, one of them consulted her chief about a tragic case she had. A young expectant mother, about twenty-three years old, had been sent on a journey of twenty-seven miles by mule and about a hundred and sixty by train to a dentist down in Lexington, in order to have her teeth removed, for they were very badly decayed. She had never been out of the hills before and, thrilled by the bright shop windows and hungry for some little gleam of civilization for her home, she had succumbed to temptation so far as to invest fifty cents in a little glass jar, containing two gold fish. And this she had brought back with her. But her teeth had been removed too late, the nurse had since discovered, to save the life of her unborn child. So she must be taken now to the hospital at Hyden.

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That afternoon I heard, at first hand, of another kind of tragedy. With one of the nurses, riding for two or three miles up Little Flat Creek, through a winding narrow cut in the hills with lovely beech forest on either slope, we came to a two-room cabin, in a small clearing near the creek; and leaving our horses at the fence, with our big rubber capes spread over their backs, because a light rain had set in, we went up to the cabin porch. And while the nurse was occupied with the women and children there, I sat down for a smoke and a talk with a lean stoop-shouldered man, who had just come up from the corn crib. I admired his cabin of huge brown logs, notched at the corners and fitted in much more snugly than were those in most of the cabins I had seen.

"Yes, it's a good cabin," he said.

"What kind of an ax do you use up here?"

"Broad ax," he answered, and he pointed to two that hung on the wall of the porch. "One of 'em is mine," he said, "an' one belongs to my old man. He's about as feisty with his ax as anybody in these hills. He helped me build this cabin—an' he helped build my daughter's, too."

By a slight tightening of his features, at this mention of his daughter's home, and by a look I caught in his eyes, I thought he was going to

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tell me at once the story I had come to hear. But he did not, and it doesn't pay to try to hurry these mountaineers. So I asked him about his father instead and I learned he was a carpenter; but, except for this cabin and that of the daughter, there had been little of the work the old man loved, in these last lean years; for the Drought had stopped such work in the hills, and he had been able to find none since, though he had looked for it far and wide.

"So he came back an' helped me here," said his son. "My two boys been helpin', too. And we've had more'n enough to do."

They got up long before daylight, I learned, and kept busy until dark. They had built the cabin a year ago and then the corn crib and the barn, and had worked a long time splitting chestnut rails for the fences, that were needed to keep the hogs out of the corn field down on the creek bottom and two little fields on the hillside above. He pointed up to one of them, on a steep slope, with many boulders.

"Turrible ploughin' up thar," he said. Now they had just got in the corn—about four hundred bushels this fall. They would need nearly all of it for themselves and their chickens, the cow and the team of mules. "No price for corn anyhow this year—only twenty-nine cents a

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bushel," he told me. They had raised a little tobacco, too, and a few bushels of potatoes. And the women had put up "a heap" of fruits and vegetables. "An' we got plenty of pork this year, so I reckon we'll git along," he said. The hogs fed themselves nearly all the year in the beech forests, running wild. The only time they needed corn was when snow was on the ground. He slit their ears with his own mark and his neighbors did the same with theirs. "We do it when they're young," he told me. "If one of 'em grows to be six months old with no slit in his ears, he's anyone's hawg." They would kill over half of them through the winter, maybe all but a few young pigs and the sow. She littered three times every year. What pork they didn't eat this winter they would smoke for the summer, he said. I asked why there were so few sheep in the hills. "There ain't no use in raisin' 'em. So many git killed by the dogs," he explained. Any hunting or trapping in winter? No. There were mighty few foxes any more. Plenty of squirrels and he'd shot quite a few. "An' I got one coon last winter," he said.

Did he own this land? No, it was Ford's. And it worked out better for him that way, because the rent he had to pay was only six dollars a year, he explained, even less than the taxes.

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And all the Ford Company asked, in return, was that he keep watch in the hills for forest fires and timber thieves. "I had to use my pistol on one of 'em last year," he said. Ford's local engineer, Chris Queen, rode up here every now and then and told him what trees he could cut for his own use, oak, beech and poplar. And he was allowed to dig coal free out of the opposite hillside. Chris Queen said it was safer than wood, to burn in the cabins. And Chris was right. So many cabins had burned down and started forest fires that way.

It was raining harder now, so we edged our chairs back close to the wall. More and more of the family, while we talked, had come out on the narrow porch. There seemed to be no end to them. His wife, his mother and his "old man," three boys and a girl in their 'teens, a slim young woman and a young man, and I counted six small children besides. Sixteen for two rooms and only six beds—four beds in one room and two in the kitchen.

"Quite a family," I said. And then, in his low-voiced reply, came the story I'd been waiting for.

"Yes, my girl an' her man an' all their kids got burnt out a while ago an' have moved up here to us," he said.

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I glanced at his slim daughter, mother of six, who stood near the kitchen door. She wore an old cotton dress that reached just below her knees, and her shoes were worn and cracked. She held a baby in her arms. Her face was thin and haggard and her eyes were dark with pain. When she saw me look at her, abruptly she turned and went inside.

"She don't like to talk about it," he said. "She set a heap of store by that cabin. Been workin' an' savin' for it years. They built it last spring down thar by the river—that's the one I told you about—on Ford's land, the same as this. But it was better land for corn. She wanted everything better than this. She was aimin' at a big new start. She had a good new bed an' three windows." There were none in the cabin here. "She'd put curtains in 'em, too, an' she'd made kivers for the beds an' a heap of children's clothes, an' even got a rug for the floor an' a fine new cookin' stove. That was how the fire came. She'd heard one of her hens squawk, up the hill, an' had run up to look for the egg it had laid. But she'd left a hot wood fire in the stove, with the draft open. She liked wood because it was cleaner than coal an' she liked to keep her house like that." Her father's cabin, I had seen, was dark and smoky inside from

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soft coal. "But the stove pipe got red hot in the wall, an' pretty soon her three-year-old boy run up the hill an' hollered 'Fire!' She thought he was jokin' her at first but then she looked down out of the woods an' saw the cabin was all smoke an' flame. When she run down thar, all she could do was to grab the baby off the bed. He was only two weeks old. She wrapped him in a blanket an' run, but he got burnt pretty bad just the same.

"She'd left doors an' windows open, so the fire swept right through an' she couldn't get out anything. She wanted to run in again, but neighbors came an' held her back. They saved the barn an' a couple of hawgs an' the crib of corn—but she'd put up more'n two hundred jars of beans an' apples an' tomatoes an' a heap of fruit an' jam—an' that was all burnt an' so was the bed an' all the kivvers an' shoes an' clothes—all but those they wore that day, an' they was the oldest clothes they had. She stood whar they held her an' watched it all go—an' then they had to lead her away—an' she's hardly spoke a word sence. An' Quinton, her husband, he gets a ladder an' looks at our stove pipe every night before goin' to bed. He wants to be sartain it ain't too hot. My daughter don't sleep good any more. I've told 'em not to worry so. They can

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winter here with us an' build a new cabin in the spring. Too bad that we got only one cow, for milk for all her 'least ones,' but we'll do the best we can."

His wife, a grandmother at forty-one, went in to get the supper now. I looked at my watch. It was half past three. At five they would eat corn mush and pork and by seven they would all be in bed—sixteen in six beds. And the haggard thin young woman, with a baby one month old, who had aimed at a big new start, would probably lie awake a while. I remembered what her father had said:

"She don't sleep good any more."

CHAPTER XV

As we rode on up the creek in the rain, with the hoods of our capes pulled over our heads, we thought about the story we'd heard. The nurse said:

"We'll help them this winter, with some money and clothes and canned milk; and she'll have a new cabin next spring. The Fordson Company will probably help to build and furnish it and neighbors will help all they can. But it will be a long, long time till she has a cabin as well equipped and attractive as the one that burned down. There are so many fires like that. They come from old cracked stone chimneys or from red hot stove pipes, with no zinc or asbestos to keep them safe, at the points where they go through the walls. So the fire starts—often in the night. Small children have been burnt to death. I've had cases myself that nearly died—terrible cases with third degree burns that covered nearly half the body. In such cases every hour counts, for they can easily die from shock. So, when a fire call comes in, we

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get to the spot as soon as we can. More than once I've had to run my horse over ice on a trail on a zero night—for that is when fires most often start.

"You can't blame them for having fires so hot. On winter nights it's cold up here. One woman brought me a plant this fall and asked me to keep it through the winter. 'It will freeze in our cabin,' she said. I've gone at night to a hurry call and, arriving with numb hands and feet, have found the cabin so cold inside that I kept on my sheepskin coat. And once on a delivery case, in a room with big cracks in its log walls that let the snow come drifting in, snow that did not melt on the floor, I reached around for something I needed and found it frozen solid in the sterilizing pan! On night cases as a rule, I work by the light of my "hurricane lantern" or of my electric torch. But there was a good oil lamp that night. A neighbor woman had brought it up from a cabin one mile down the creek. I had met her on my way, walking very carefully in the deep snow on the trail, holding the lamp in front of her. Nearly always neighbor women will come in to help like that. They set the big iron kettle on the fire or the stove, and have the boiling water we need ready by the time we arrive. They look after the

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children, too, or take them home to spend the night."

Rounding a bend in the creek, we came to a small cabin, with an old couple sitting outside.

"Howdy. Stop an' set a while, an' git in out of the rain," the old man called down to us. We dismounted and went up to the porch. He was dirty and lean and wrinkled and brown. Chin whiskers and a corncob pipe. His old dog rose and limped away.

"That's a feisty dog," he said to me. "He's half hound an' half Hairdale. His leg got broke by a fallin' tree, but I wouldn't sell that dog for a hundred dollars. No sirree. Best dog for squirrels I ever did see. I got a heap of squirrels this fall." He opened his shirt and showed the nurse a large swelling on his breast. "That come from a gun kick. Been botherin' me for weeks," he said. She told him to come to a doctor's clinic at the center, that same week, and he said he guessed he would. Then I asked if he had got in his corn. "My grandson looks after that," he replied. "Me an' my old woman is too old to work any more. So I hunt some an' trap a little an' look after the Company's timber."

Did he own this clearing? No, it was Ford's.

"The Company sent me a three year lease an' hit didn't cost me a cent," he said. "An' we got

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thousands of bushels of coal right down thar in the creek bottom. We got this little gyarden, too, for growin' our potatoes an' beans—an' a few geese an' chickens an' hawgs. An' so we aim to git along."

Loud squawking came from behind the house, and the old dog growled and the old man said:

"Thar's that hawk after them chickens again! I'm go'n' to git him one of these days!" But we looked and found that the pilfering hawk had soared high up again in the sky. I admired a grand old apple tree at the edge of the "gyarden" nearby, and its owner was quick to agree. "Hit's the finest apple tree in the whole United States," he declared. "Best tastin' apples I ever did eat. My old woman has put up a hheap this year."

The dog jumped up, with a quick low bark, and stood rapidly wagging his tail.

"Thar comes Dally," the old man said.

Down the deep narrow valley came a wagon drawn by a team of mules, its clatter and bang made doubly loud by echoes from the steep wooded hills. It was driven by their grandson, Dal, a tall wiry youngster of twenty or so, who from daybreak with a friend had been hard at it to get the corn all under shelter before the rain, in a barn a half a mile away. He put up his

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team and then came to the house to wash up for supper, which his grandmother was cooking now. I saw no other young people about and asked our host what had become of his children.

"Mostly scattered," he replied. "One of 'em dead an' two in Ohio an' one girl in Oklyhoma. The other five stuck to the hills but only two stayed in this county. Dal lives with us. His mother is dead. Hit's queer what movin' times will come to any family," he went on. "My people lived once in Virginny—stayed thar for a hunderd years. Then my great-granddad up an' moves, comes over here with Dan'l Boone. An' here we stay again a while, every last one of us plumb content. No movin' except in case of war—an' even then we all come back—except for those who had got kilt. But now hit's movin' time again an' all our children's moved away. That's life in the United States. They all help us when they can but they keep writin' about hard times. Hit's the hardest time known since the world first stood—but I reckon the country will come through. Hit always has an' hit always will."

He asked us to stay for supper then. But already it was the "edge of dark," so we left and rode down the darkening trail to the nursing center three miles away.

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That night Mrs. Breckinridge spoke again of the courage and endurance of pain among the Kentucky mountaineers. Just as most of the men and boys have volunteered in every war and in peacetime are quick to risk their lives, when they feel that their rights are concerned, so when a woman has a baby, she grits her teeth and does her best to get through without a sound. One of the nurses, not long ago, went to a maternity case in a one-room cabin far up in the hills, and there she found the wife alone, lying grimly silent in bed, though the first labor pains had begun.

"I told Ed to go up to his fodderin', I don't need him here," she said.

On lifting up the bed clothes, in order to examine her patient, the nurse discovered that she had a pistol on each side of her and another one lying between her breasts!

"Thar's been a powerful lot 'of shootin' around this cabin," she explained. "Ed's got a heap of enemies. An' bein' all alone like this, I aimed to take no chances."

She went through her long labor without a cry, and most of the mothers do the same. That evening at Flat Creek, one of the nurses gave me several instances:

"I remember one young mother on a bitterly

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cold night, exhausted by her agony, said to me in a low broken voice: 'Please go an' see has Betty got the kivvers on?' Another one of them whispered: 'Git Dan to come an' hold my hand. I can't go through it without Dan.' And a third said: 'Send for Zeke.' Zeke soon peeked in and then fled to the barn and stayed there till after the baby was born. But the following day, when I came back for a look at mother and child, I found her with her 'wishing book,' a Sears Roebuck catalogue. 'Zeke's go'n' to give me a present,' she said."

I heard about Old Harry, too. Old Harry had been leading his mule, with the rein twisted around his arm; and the mule had suddenly bolted and dragged its owner by the rein, down along a rocky trail. He was brought, unconscious and all cut up, to the center and remained for a week. When he first came to, he said: "Gimme a tooth-pick." But then he noticed, with a start, the three strange women by his bed. A scared puzzled look leaped into his eyes, as though he were searching his whole past life. At last he feebly shook his head. "No, none of you ain't my woman," he said.

I had a fine long sleep that night. The rain had stopped and the hills were still—except for the long slow hoot of an owl, from far up the mountain-side.

CHAPTER XVI

WITH one of the nurses, the next day, we rode a little way down along the Red Bird River. The local post office was there, in a corner of the general store; and while my two companions rode around to the house at the rear to see a patient, I waited in front. The store, a small frame building, was locked at the time, but I looked in through a window on the high front porch. I've seen a good many country stores but never one with so many bare shelves and an appearance so forlorn. Patiently waiting for it to open, a woman sat on a big white mule, with two barefoot little boys, one in front of her and one behind. Though it was by no means cold, she wore an old quilted jacket that reached nearly to her knees. It had a thin moth-eaten fur collar. She wore white stockings and high black shoes, and I noticed a spur on the left shoe. I asked her about the age of the mule. He was eighteen, she told me, and getting more pert with every year. He would prob-

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ably live to be thirty or so. But she herself was not so well.

"I feel drowsy and bad," she told the nurse, as my two companions rejoined me there. "Hit's about all I can do to drag one foot after the other."

"That sounds like hookworm, Mrs. D."

"Yes," said the woman, "I reckon it is." She spoke with a dull listless smile. Would she go to the hospital to see the doctor, and perhaps be wormed? She would think it over, she said.

Leaving the nurse soon after that, we started out for the center at Beech Fork, which was about twelve miles away. As we turned from Red Bird River up Bowen's Creek, along a narrow muddy road with a corn field rising steep at our right, a man, who was at work up there stacking corn around long poles, with his old father and his son, left them and came down to the fence to talk with Mrs. Breckinridge. Beneath the brim of an old slouch hat, his dark fine face was lined with worry, his low voice had a discouraged note. He had been worrying, he said, about ten dollars he owed her for an old horse that he had bought from the nursing service the year before.

"I had aimed to pay it by now but I'm in a



Fording the Middle Fork
Red Bird River Center



Mothers Coming in to Clinic
 Girls Being Taught Baby Care
 Mothers' Club at Red Bird

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hard place," he said. "When the Big Drought was over last spring, I got fifty dollars from the Governmint, so I could buy seed and fertilizer. They told me that I'd have to sign a mortgage on my corn crop this fall. And I done it, like most of the people up here. I wish now we'd listened to Bob Gayheart. He warned us not to sign away our crops to the governmint people like that. But we snurled up our noses at him. Now I don't know what to do. They've sent me a notice that I must pay. If I don't, they will have to dispose of my crop. But I raised only two hundred bushels this year and the best price I can get is twenty-nine cents a bushel up here. So if I sell enough to pay the fifty dollars that I owe, there won't be nothin' much left to feed my family with this winter. So I can't settle just now for that horse—and I don't know just what to do."

"Never mind about the horse," Mrs. Breckinridge replied. "He was an old horse anyhow. We just wanted him to have a good home, and I know he has with you. And I wouldn't worry too much about that seed loan, Mr. C. I can't believe the government will take away your food this year."

About a month later, however, I learned that

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the federal agent had so pressed him that at last he gave in, sold a large part of his crop and paid his debt, and then had a hard time to maintain his family and live stock. Since then, I hear, the government has modified its policy and is not pressing for payment of loans, made when corn was selling at seventy-five cents a bushel, in corn that brings only thirty cents, when thrown upon the market today.

We rode on up Bowen's Creek and then over a mountain by a steep trail. We came into lonely country up there. I remember one dirty old cabin we passed, with a listless little group of men and women and children on the porch. But soon, in sharp contrast to that, we came to a cabin being built near a temporary shack. Two young men were working on the frame of huge red logs, close to a big pink mulberry tree. A young wife and two small children sat on a log and watched the work. And their faces and the ring of the axes told of new life up that way.

In that high country, at one point, a trail wound off up a side valley.

"That's Woodson's Fork," said my companion, "one of the loneliest regions we know. The mountaineers don't like to go there at night—for it's haunted, so they say. You may hear about 'the wailing woman' from old Nancy

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Powderly, if we can find her at Beech Fork tonight."

Crossing over a high bare gap, we went by many twists and turns down Bad Creek for a number of miles. And we stopped at a one-room cabin, on a steep slope above the trail. On sighting my companion, a woman ran out to talk to us, with several small children peeking shyly from behind.

"I sure am glad to see you!" she cried. And to me she added: "I was the sickest woman that was ever known to live—and Mrs. Breckinridge saved my life!"

"Oh, no, I didn't, Mrs. E. That was done by our nurses here," Mary Breckinridge replied. "But how about your children? They're not looking very strong." They were puny, thin and colorless.

"They ain't well. Hit's the truth," the mother agreed. "An' I don't know just what to do, with the whole winter still ahead. You know how it's been, Mrs. Breckinridge. We was doin' pretty well at first, but in the Big Drought we got started down, an' we been goin' ever since. My man can't get no work outside, an' we got no land here—hit's the truth—no land that's any good, I mean. We got no grass to feed a cow, even if we had one—an' in my little garden

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up thar, the turnips an' mustard won't come up, nor nothin' else, so we got no greens. All we can raise is a little corn, an' for meat we only got two hawgs."

"We're going to help you, Mrs. E. First of all, we want you to bring all your children down to the center, to arrange about having them wormed. And then we can spare you very soon a load of manure for that garden, and we can share with you our meat and canned milk."

"Yeah? That sure is good of you!"

We left her soon and rode away, and my companion told me of the desperate illness to which the woman had referred:

"In that one-room cabin, she and her husband and six small children slept in two beds. And she was expecting another child soon. But long before her time arrived, she developed *placenta praevia*. She was not in our care at that time; so when the hemorrhage began, she sent for an old native midwife. But the midwife could do nothing and grew frightened, and sent us the news. One of our nurses came up on the run and found her in a critical state, demanding a doctor's attention at once. So the nurse sent out two messengers, one to our supervisor and to me, and another off across the hills for a doctor in a neighboring county. For this happened some

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time ago, when we had no doctor of our own. We tried doctors in two adjoining counties. One was away and one wouldn't come. So we lost two days by that.

"But meanwhile I'd sent an extra nurse, and one all day and the other all night stayed right at that woman's side. Twice the hemorrhage increased. They were able to check it by packing, though, and we got a doctor the third day, from the third county that we tried. From Hazard he rode the twenty-five miles to Wendover in seven hours, arriving about nine at night. There we gave him a fresh horse and some sandwiches and a guide, and he rode on right over here. He reached his patient at two in the morning, did a version and saved her life. But she never would have lived till he came, without that special nursing care.

"After the operation, it was nip and tuck for a time, so we specialed that woman for some days longer and so finally pulled her through. The doctor had advised another operation later. We persuaded her husband and herself to give their consent, and three months later she went down to Lexington and had it there. She had never seen a railroad before. On her way out, she came to Wendover, behind her husband on a mule. She wore a sweater and calico dress.

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She was very tired that night and took comfort in her corncob pipe.

“ ‘Kin I smoke when I git to the settlemints?’ she asked me in a wistful tone. I told her that I knew the surgeon and I’d try to have it arranged!”

CHAPTER XVII

WE reached Beech Fork in time for lunch. The nursing center there, I learned, was given by a Boston woman in memory of her Kentucky mother, Jessie Preston Draper. Well up on a wooded hillside, not far from the confluence of Beech Fork and Middle Fork rivers, it was an attractive white frame cottage, set in a grove of fine big beeches. Both nurses were out, when we arrived, but they came back about two o'clock; and after lunch and an hour's rest, they started out with us on foot, down to the river, across it on rocks and up by a steep winding path to a cabin, in which old Nancy Powderly was visiting.

Long ago she had been the wife of a well known mountaineer. But he had divorced her and married again; and although he was willing enough to help her and the children, not once since the day when she left his home had she accepted his aid for herself and her two small sons.

"I brought up my two boys without him!

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"They're all mine!" she said to us. And she added, in a tense hard tone: "They're closer to me than my own heart!"

Her voice was deep and rough as a man's. Wearing an old woolen skirt and jacket and stout high black shoes, her thin grey hair done up in a twist, her wide jaw set, face strongly lined, old Nancy, old at fifty-eight, made a powerful figure sitting there. She knew the life of the mountains well, good and evil, weak and strong. She knew, too, about its "hants." But she was not ready to talk of them yet, so she sat on that narrow cabin porch and talked for some time of her sons. She told how she had worked for them since they were born and with them ever since they were grown, in the corn fields early and late, from the spring right through till fall. And in winter she had carded and spun and dyed the wool, red, blue, brown and yellow, with dyes that she herself had made from hickory and walnut and several other kinds of bark. So she had made clothes for herself and her boys and crazy quilt "kivvers" for cold winter nights.

Her woman friend took us into the cabin and showed us some quilts, on two big double beds. Two of them were lovely things. But the best ones nowadays, Nancy said, were made by

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Charity Napier up on Thousand Sticks Mountain and by a woman on Greasy Creek. She herself did not make so many, these years, for both of her boys were married now and her six small grandchildren kept her busy making clothes. This autumn she had taken some wool to a friend's house five miles away, and had carded and spun and dyed it there. This time she had bought the dyes at the store, but the old dyes were better, she said. Many women nowadays sent their wool to mills outside of the hills and had all the work done for them there, the mill keeping half the wool, in payment for their work, and returning the other half in skeins of yarn or cloth to them. But Nancy "snurled up her nose" at that.

All summer she had worked with her sons in the corn fields from daybreak till dark, visiting from one to the other, so as to help see them through. They had finished foddering only on the day before, so now she had come to these friends of hers, and maybe tonight they would walk up the creek to a cabin, where there was to be a Holy Roller revival, she said. The preaching was to be done by a neighbor and by a man from Louisville. She was going not so much for religion. She knew how to handle that alone, and needed no man to help her with God.

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But she liked the singing, she said, and a sociable little time after the long summer's work. She had liked dances when she was young, square dances, the old-fashioned kind.

"None of that jazz has got into these hills—nor them round dances neither," she said. The Holy Rollers would stand none of that.

"After the revival, I aimed to visit a friend, who lives about two days' ridin' from here," she went on. "I aimed to borrow a mule from my son. But I'm afraid to leave him now. Once he got his leg broke by a fallin' bank of coal—an' now he's diggin' his coal for the winter—an' he don't want me to go away—nor I to leave him. I was thar to see him today. He was up in a coal bank, workin' in. When I told him I aimed to go away, he looked at me—sayin' nothin' at all. But I could tell by the look of his eyes, for he's closer to me than my own heart. An' both of us knew that his luck was bad and that he might get hurt again."

Old Nancy knew about luck, good and bad, and its power over people's lives. And she knew also about "hants." Had she seen any? "No, but I've heared 'em," she said. We were getting close to my story now, the story I had come to get. Her hard deep voice much lower and slower, Nancy told me this grim little tale:

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"One winter I lived with my boys in a cabin up on Woodson's Fork. People had told me of hants up thar but I didn't take no stock in that an' I aimed to try hit anyhow. The story was that once a man had left his young wife thar alone, just before her baby came—left her in the winter time, without no food. There are sorry men who can do such things. An' her labor began an' her cries was heard by an old neighbor passin' by. He came in an' built up the fire—for it was turrible cold in thar—then run off to get a woman to help. But when they got back, the mother was dead. An' her hant has stayed thar ever since. In the night time hit began—like this."

She drew a deep breath and then heaved out a long loud exhausted sigh, like that of a woman half dead with pain and weariness.

"Hit came from a corner down by the floor alongside the fireplace. Hit stopped an' then hit came again an' hit kept comin' all night long. I had no use for hants before. Didn't believe in 'em. 'No,' I said, 'we won't move out. This is nothin' but wind comin' up through the floor.' So we raised the planks an' kivvered 'em tight. But just as sure as I set here, that wailin' sigh kept comin' still—night after night—the whole night through. So we moved out of thar that

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spring an' the cabin's been empty ever since. But people that pass can hear hit still—an' they call hit the house of the wailin' woman—an' they don't like to go by in the dark. All Woodson's Fork is hanted now. Thar's a hant that jumps up on the rump of your horse an' rides right with you, so they say. An' the reason for the hants is this—first, the sin of the man who left his young woman—an' next, the mean people up that-a-way. For they be mean people up that-a-way—pure wastin's and sweepin's!" Nancy said.

Soon after that, we were interrupted by a young woman who came up the hill. She had a sick child in her cabin, she said, and had walked to the center for help and so had learned of our whereabouts. One of the nurses promised to come and the worried young mother started home. We walked back to the center and saddled two horses and I rode out with the nurse to her case. Crossing the river in the dark, we started slowly up Bad Creek, in a light soft drizzle of rain.

"We don't have to hurry tonight. I know about this case," said the nurse, "and from what the mother told me, it could easily wait till morning. But I don't want her to worry so."

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As we walked our horses, I learned that the nurse had come from Connecticut and was a Wellesley graduate. She had been trained in this country in nursing and in public health work, British-trained in midwifery. She had been here for several years. I asked her about Woodson's Fork. Had she ever been up there? Yes, she had.

"And I didn't see any hants," she said, "but the people in cabins up that way thought I was a ghost myself that night. I got the call in a snow blizzard and, with the man who had come for me, I made the eight-mile trip up there. This trail wasn't like it is tonight. There was a foot at least of snow over the rocks and it made slow going. The man had a lantern but in the snow storm it gave only a weak little light. We reached the cabin just in time for me to deliver his wife. I stayed there for three hours or so. The man told me that he felt too sick to come back with me, so I started alone. If I'd had my old horse, he'd have known the way home, but I had a new horse from Wendover, who wasn't used to the trails up here; so I got lost in the blizzard and had to wake up the people in two or three cabins to ask for directions. I gave them quite a scare that night, for from head to foot I was white with snow and I made a perfectly

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splendid ghost. It took me five hours to get home."

She told me of a wind storm that caught her once on a high ridge. On all sides trees came crashing down and so frightened her horse that she had to dismount and tether him and crouch by a log until the wind storm had gone by. I asked her for more stories; and after thinking a little, she said:

"Well, I remember a young mountaineer who came for me one evening. He seemed to have something on his mind that was worrying him a lot. All he would say about the case was that a woman had been stabbed and that she didn't belong in the district. We found her lying in a cabin with two ugly stabs in the back. She was a slim dark pretty young thing, only about seventeen. Later I learned that, while there on a visit, she'd had a little love affair with the young man who had come for me, and who lived with his wife in a cabin close by. So his wife had come over and stabbed her that night. As soon as she was well enough, she left the district and never returned. For vamping husbands in these hills is a mighty dangerous game.

"It's easy riding, a night like this, but so often we get hurry calls, and then we have to go on the run. I remember a man with a swollen

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arm. He'd been bitten by a copperhead. His wife came for me on a mule. Women rarely go out at night but she could find no one to send. And she was scared. She had good cause. For he had been bitten hours ago; and by the time I got to him, his arm had purple streaks and blotches and was swollen twice its size. He was in a high fever, too. I injected the serum for snake bites and I stayed with him all night long. Then, as the fever and swelling went down, I brought him back to the center at dawn and kept him for a day or two. He made a full recovery.

"Another time, while making a pre-natal examination call, I found in the same cabin a baby with diphtheria. Its little throat was closing fast. I sent a man on the gallop to the center for antitoxin, and from there they sent for our doctor. Luckily he wasn't far off. By hard riding he arrived in time, put a silver tube in the throat and saved the child from choking to death. But we have to be quick about such things.

"But no more stories," said the nurse, "for we'll find it harder going now."

From the creek, we climbed by a trail so steep, we had to hold to our horses' manes; and along the ridge above, the path for forty rods or so was close to the crumbling edge of a cliff. She had come there once in a blizzard, she said,

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when the trail was all powdery snow and ice. But tonight the rain had stopped, the moon shone down through a misty sky and we could easily see our way. We descended soon by a winding path into a hollow in the hills, lovely under that misty moon; and there in a field was a small log cabin, with a ruddy glow of light coming through the open door. Dropping the reins of our horses over the pickets of the fence, we climbed a steep path to the porch and went in.

The cabin had only a single room, and that not over twelve feet square, and more than half the space was filled by a cooking stove and two double beds. Two thin young men stood by the hearth and near them sat a small girl on a keg, while a tiny boy sat on the floor toasting his bare feet in the glow from a fire of faggots and logs. The soft crackle that they made and the slow tick of the clock overhead were the only sounds in the room. The mother and nurse stood by a bed, in which sat a boy about six years old, and the nurse had her ear to his chest. Suddenly I recognized him—and his little sister, too—as the pair I had seen at the hospital at Hyden, waiting to be wormed. It's an exhausting process, so they had been kept three days in bed and the nurse, who brought them home on her horse, had told the mother to keep them

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quiet for the rest of the week—instead of which, we now discovered, the boy had gone out on a long hike with his uncle Cory looking for squirrels. For he was an adventurous little chap and loved to roam about the hills. But he had been born with a weak heart. So he had dizzy spells tonight.

The nurse was talking to him now and giving a simple remedy. I noticed two shotguns over the door. The only cupboard was a soap box, with shelves inside, hung on a wall. The night air came sifting up through big cracks in the uneven plank floor, but those in the walls had been covered by scores and scores of colored pages cut from fashion magazines and catalogues dating back for years. The gay gowns depicted there had nothing to do with the stout wool skirt which hung from a beam with some other clothes. The ceiling, so low I could almost reach it, was of long wide strips of lin bark laid upon the rafters. Through a huge gap I could see the low loft, with strings of tobacco hanging there and several hundred ears of corn.

In silence the small boy took his treatment. In silence, but with hungry eyes, shy smiles and quickly clutching hands, the three children took from me three packages of chewing gum. We said good-night and went down the path. From

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my saddle I looked back. A lonely primitive little home. And a low buzz of excited voices—children's voices—from inside.

And this was my last close-up view of the Kentucky mountaineers.

CHAPTER XVIII

WE returned to Wendover the next day and soon after that I left to come north. From the many long talks I had with Mary Breckinridge while I was there, on our rides and in the centers at night, and from some of her printed statements, too, I want to gather here at the end some of the things she has said, of how she sees through her present work into the years that lie ahead.

"We never could have come so far as we have in these first six years," she told me, "if it hadn't been for the spirit shown by our nurses from the start. In the Great Drought, when for many months most of them were in the saddle literally day and night, we grew so hard pressed for funds to relieve the terrible suffering that reluctantly I asked each nurse to take a postponement of one month's salary. Their agreement was unanimous—and here are two of their replies: 'The Frontier Nursing Service means more to us than anything in the world,' wrote one. And another asked me: 'Am I not old enough in the Service to share in its sacrifices?'"

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"All our nurses have been like that. And there have been generous friends outside. First of all, in Kentucky. I never could have done what I have, if it weren't for the constant help of friends and kin all through the State. For we're all like one big family here, deep, deep rooted in the soil. But it is not a wealthy State. Less than one percent of the population pays an income tax. And it has been hard hit in these last years; and so, as our budget has grown to over a hundred and sixty thousand a year, the greater part of which has to be raised outside the hills, more and more has come from our friends up in the North. On our National Board of Trustees and Executive Board, we have every section represented that is interested in our problem; and we have local committees, too, in New York, Boston, Cincinnati, Louisville, Lexington, St. Louis, Baltimore, Chicago, Pittsburgh, St. Paul, Minneapolis, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Rochester, and in some smaller centers, too, all of them doing splendid work. And we have national medical and nursing councils to help and advise us.

"But all this has meant that, being director, more and more of my time must be spent on journeys far outside the hills. I come back from a trip and, as you've seen, I'm busy here at

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Wendover with two secretaries, my correspondence and all kinds of local problems. Then I ride the rounds of the centers and soon I must be off again for organizing work outside—driven by our expanding needs. For though mothers and the birth of children are still our primary concern, that leads on to family care and the prevention of disease and social service of all kinds. In spite of all we've done so far, I feel as though we'd just begun. We've made great headway against disease but we've still to attack the poverty. And I've long had a larger dream for the whole life and work down here.

"These people in the mountains are worth all that we can give. Some of them are moonshiners, of course, but they don't consider that a crime. Stealing is practically unknown; and in all the years of our service, I could count on the fingers of my two hands all those who have asked us for charity. But they are poor, for it is hard to wring a living out of this soil. Some people in the North have asked, why not move them out of the hills? The answer is that they won't go. They love these hills, they love their homes. It would take more men than those in the U. S. Army to evacuate six million reluctant people from their isolated homes, in a mountain range larger than the entire State of New York.

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And even then, where would they go? And besides, there is no real need to go, for this whole mountain region can be made in time to yield a good living to all its inhabitants. Nine-tenths of it is forest still, so timber is the great hope here. And though, as the game has been shot away, so the forests, too, are being destroyed in all districts near the streams, on which the logs can be floated out, still on the ridges and back in the hills are hundreds of thousands of acres untouched, virgin forests like those you've seen, most of it owned by large companies.

"So, looking to the future, I arranged with two graduates of the Yale School of Forestry to come down here and make a careful survey of the forests in two counties. It showed that, through generations of reckless wasteful cutting in all but the inaccessible parts, the stands of forest have grown poor and the amount of growing timber entirely inadequate, both in value of species and size, compared to what the growth might be with more careful management. And they worked out a plan to replace the old methods by scientific forestry development as in Europe, by selective cutting and wiser nurture of the trees, a few miles of rail and truck roads at various strategic points as a means of getting the products to market, and small mills and fac-

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tories through the hills, to make such forest products as furniture, boxes, baskets, dyes and various chemical compounds.

"All this would mean employment to many thousand mountaineers, and the plan carried far enough would be certain to work a wonderful change. I am hoping to persuade some of the big timber companies to make experiments of this kind. For the health of the people is our concern, and that means decent jobs for them—new hope and vigor in the hills—a revival of the vigor and hope of their forefathers in the early days.

"So much for our work in Kentucky. We have already gone far enough with our nursing service here to demonstrate its effective value in the safeguarding of life. And already this demonstration has led to calls for similar service in other parts of the country. We are frequently asked to supply nurse-midwives to missions and settlements in the Appalachians and to teach in training schools. And at the request of a group in St. Louis, we have already made a survey of a district in the Ozark Mountains. So this first experiment is becoming a training field for the extension of such work in other such communities. In the Ozarks, Alleghenies and Rockies, on islands and on lonely strips of coastland, in

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our great forests and out on our plains, nearly fifteen million of our fellow men and women are still living pioneer lives, in regions where doctors are few and far between—neglected outposts of civilization. And these are the people who need our aid.

“We have heard too much from our writers, of late, of how this nation has left its youth behind and is on the road to decay. Some of them love to emphasize, in all their books and stories, degeneration in our life. But the vigor and youth of a nation is born again in its children, and most of all in the country districts. Fully eighty percent, I am told, of the men who direct our great corporations, came from rural regions, mainly in the West and South. For Mother Nature has a way of reaching over rich nurseries to her own rough bosom and picking great men from the soil. And whether these men are to become wise and unselfish, as well as great, will depend largely upon the opportunities we share with them now, when they are small.

“So let us give such boys a chance. Help mothers to have their children well born. Remember that maternity is the young woman’s battle-field. It is more dangerous, painful and mutilating even than war; but for her there will be no trum-

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pets or drums. Off on the lonely farmstead, where the true heart of America beats, the young mother faces her agony, that the hope of our nation may come into life. Who is taking care of Alabam Sizemore, down on Hurricane Creek tonight, when her baby is being born? On the answer hang the vital statistics of America, at their most vulnerable point. For her we need the Frontier Nurses—new pioneers on old frontiers.”

Such in the main is the platform of this national campaign for human life and happiness, as I heard it from its founder. She has met with disaster since. Only a few days after my departure, in November, 1931, leaving home to go north on a speaking tour for the money support she so urgently needs, she started on horseback to reach by trail the motor road some miles away. I have ridden that trail. With many turns and ups and downs, it winds up along Hurricane Creek, on the sides and along the half-dry bed of rocks and giant boulders. Mary Breckinridge went that way. It was raining. She wore her big rubber cape. And she was trying out that day a new horse from the Blue Grass, and the wind blew the cape and frightened him. He bolted up that rocky trail and for three miles he tore along, until at last her knees

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grew numb and she could keep her seat no longer. In the fall, she broke several ribs and her back, and for over two months she lay helpless in bed.

But she has recovered since; and even while she lay in bed she courageously drove her work straight on. Hers is the third casualty among the nursing pioneers. There was Nancy, "the red-haired nurse," who risked and lost her life in the service. There was "Harry," who nearly lost hers, too, through a fractured skull and the breaking out of an old war wound because of the hardships she endured. And then their chief was stricken down. Thirty-one women. In seven years, one of them dead and two of them wounded. Garibaldi long ago said to the men of Italy:

"What I have to offer you is fatigue, danger, struggle, with risk of death; the chill of the cold night in the free air, and heat under the burning sun; no lodgings, uncertain provisions, forced marches, dangerous outposts. Those who love humanity and their country may follow me!"

The Frontier Nurses are like that.

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